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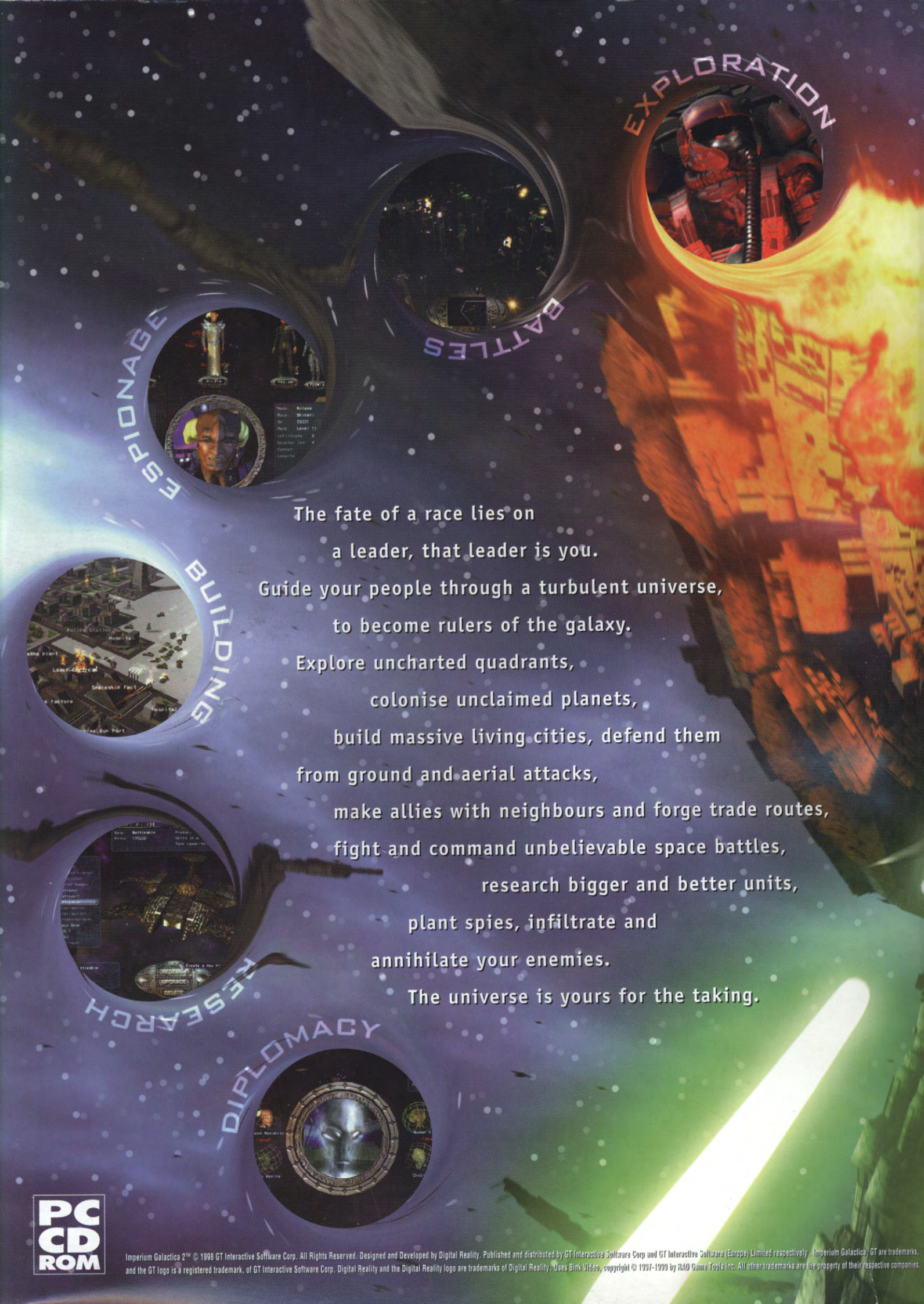
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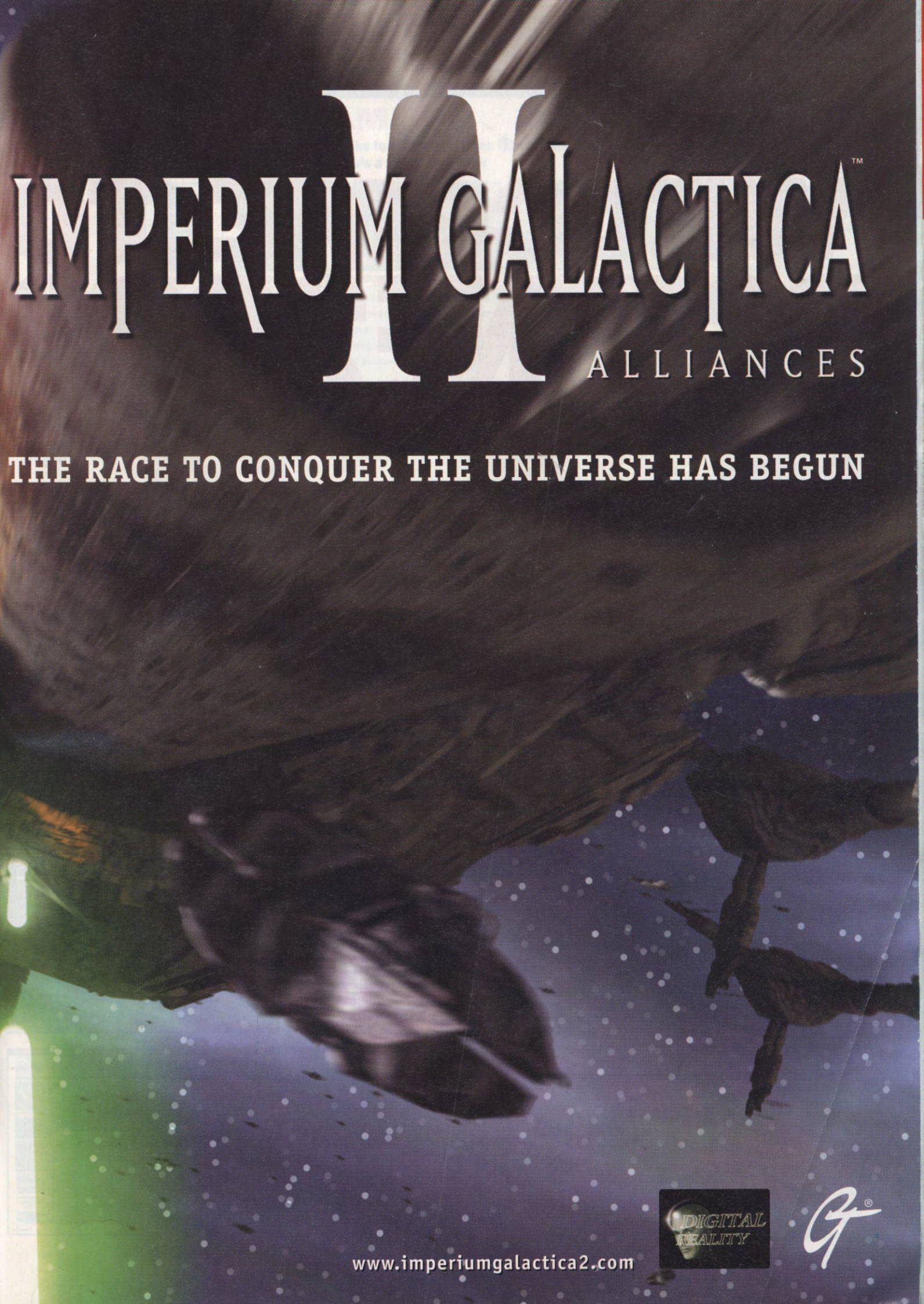
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WELCOME TO PCZONE2000

The more astute among you will have noticed by now that this is a very special issue of *PC ZONE*. Over the following pages you will see the future of PC gaming slowly unfold before your very eyes (not literally, obviously). We have a feature-packed issue, with a look ahead to no less than 200 games you will be playing this year and beyond, a comprehensive look at the future of online gaming, the search for the *PC ZONE* game of the millennium and tons more besides.

Moving on to the stuff we *don't* have: unsurprisingly *Daikatana* did not make it in time for review this issue. Yes we know, we put it on the cover of the January issue, but that was because Eidos told us it would be with us without fail. Clearly that didn't happen, so either Eidos screwed up, or Ion Storm screwed up, whatever, it just didn't happen, so apologies all round if you bought *PC ZONE* expecting a *Daikatana* review. The fact it didn't make it in time for this issue either makes us wonder if the game exists at all, or whether it is in fact just a figment of Jon Romero's imagination. More news on this as we get it, the game that is, not Romero's imagination.

Also notable by its absence is *Ultima Ascension*. We were poised to review it having played it extensively over the last few weeks, but EA told us the UK boxed version was being held back and is not being released until the end of February. This is presumably an attempt by EA to ensure the UK version ships without all the bugs and D3D problems currently plaguing the US version of the game. We hope to have a full review in our March issue (on sale 10 February). However, regardless of the bugs, we managed to get the US version running acceptably after much grief, and it has to be said it is no masterpiece by a very long shot. If for some reason *Ultima Ascension* appears in the shops before we have a chance to review it, we strongly advise you not to buy it. The quality of the game itself is as much in question at this point as the integrity of the QA process. You have been warned.

There *is* good news for RPG fans however. *Planescape Torment* is finally with us and it's turned out to be a bit of a gem. Read our full review on page 90 for details.

On a personal note, I would like to thank you all for your support and encouragement throughout 1999, and I hope you will continue to enjoy the very best PC games magazine in existence throughout 2000 and beyond.

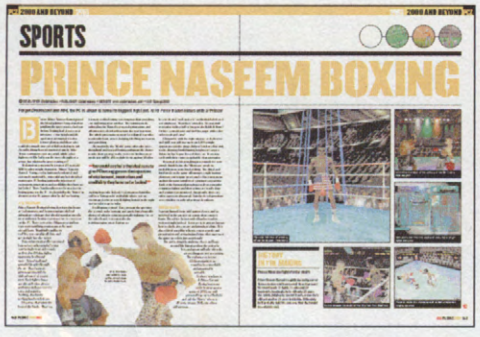
Enjoy the issue – see you all again next month.

Chris Anderson, Editor













MEET THE ZONE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a reviewer who's a fan of the genre



CHRIS ANDERSON

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

Faster, more affordable Internet connections will bring online gaming to the masses. Amen.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Ultima IX: Ascension. The death of a legend.



DAVE WOODS

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

Cheap, high-speed Internet accounts, and then we can all play games like *UT* and *Q3* as they're supposed to be played – with others.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Championship Manager 3. I managed to get Coventry relegated in my first season. Haven't touched it since.



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

That people will finally realise that the best games don't necessarily come from the biggest developers.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Tiberian Sun was the biggest let-down, followed by *The Phantom Menace*.



MARK HILL

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

That finally someone somewhere will create a decent *Star Trek* game that everyone will love.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

The continual decline of the adventure game.



PAUL MALLINSON

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

I really like that new mouse that Microsoft brought out recently – the one with the thumb button.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Not being able to find anyone willing to play *System Shock 2* multiplayer with me...



STEVE HILL

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

Online football management. It's time it was done properly.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Chester City's freefall plummet towards the bottom of the Football League



CHARLIE BROOKER

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

I've said it before and I'll say it again: a game where you walk around a small market town punching nine-year-old girls in the face.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Biggest gaming disappointment of '99: *Outcast*. It still bores me now just thinking about it. That and *GTA2* not being a bit better.



DAVID MCCANDLESS

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

Real war, online. Something along the lines of *Team Fortress*.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

As usual, Christmas.



PAUL PRESLEY

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

There shall be a moving of environments towards real-world locales.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Tiberian Sun: it was – a tired, unoriginal, seen-it-all-before, nothing-new, travesty of a game.



PHIL WAND

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

Flat fee, unmetered access to the Internet, along with 512Kbps connectivity thanks to Cable and ADSL.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Quake III. Like *Quake II* there is absolutely nothing unique, progressive, or remotely stimulating about it.



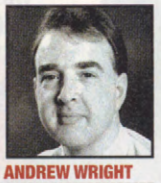
KEITH PULLIN

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

A push towards standardising machines. Let's face it – PCs are all over the bloody place at the moment.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Too many sub-standard first-person shooters. They bore the crap out of me.



ANDREW WRIGHT

What will be the next big thing in PC gaming?

Voice recognition is the next big step, but the real challenge will be interpreting less obvious instructions.

What was the biggest disappointment of 1999?

Tiberian Sun – great game but there just wasn't enough there to justify what, three, four years of development?













PCZONE

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WIN! Who developed *Quake III*? Send entries on the back of a postcard to: I've read the small print, *PC ZONE* (86), 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ by Thursday 10 February. Winner and prize announced same place next issue.

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NEXT ISSUE: *PCZ* #87 (March) goes on sale on Thursday 10th February Don't miss it!

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52 **PRINCE NASEEM BOXING** Heart of a lion and mouth of a giant.



12 **TEAM FORTRESS 2** Just as we were going to press, Valve dumped a whole load of new screenshots for its huge new shooter. Hooray. Check 'em out and get ready for action.



38 **DIABLO II** Demons, dungeons, swords and sorcery – with bells on.



32 **GRAND PRIX 3** The best *Formula One* game ever? We reckon.



26 **ALONE IN THE DARK 4** The scariest game in the world. Probably.



18 **WARCRAFT III** Strategy with a twist of role-playing – it's the future, according to Blizzard and its stunning new floosie, *Warcraft III*. Check out our huge preview.



46 **B-17 FLYING FORTRESS 2: THE MIGHTY EIGHTH** Plane sailing.

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2000 AND BEYOND

To lead you into the New Year with a bang, we've compiled the ultimate round-up of the best previews in town. We've got all the latest information and screenshots from the 200 hottest games of the new millennium. See what's going to be rocking your bells in the 21st century

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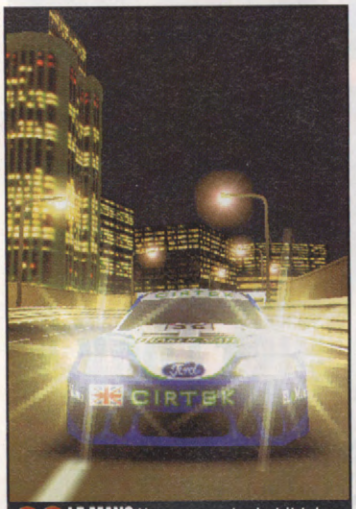
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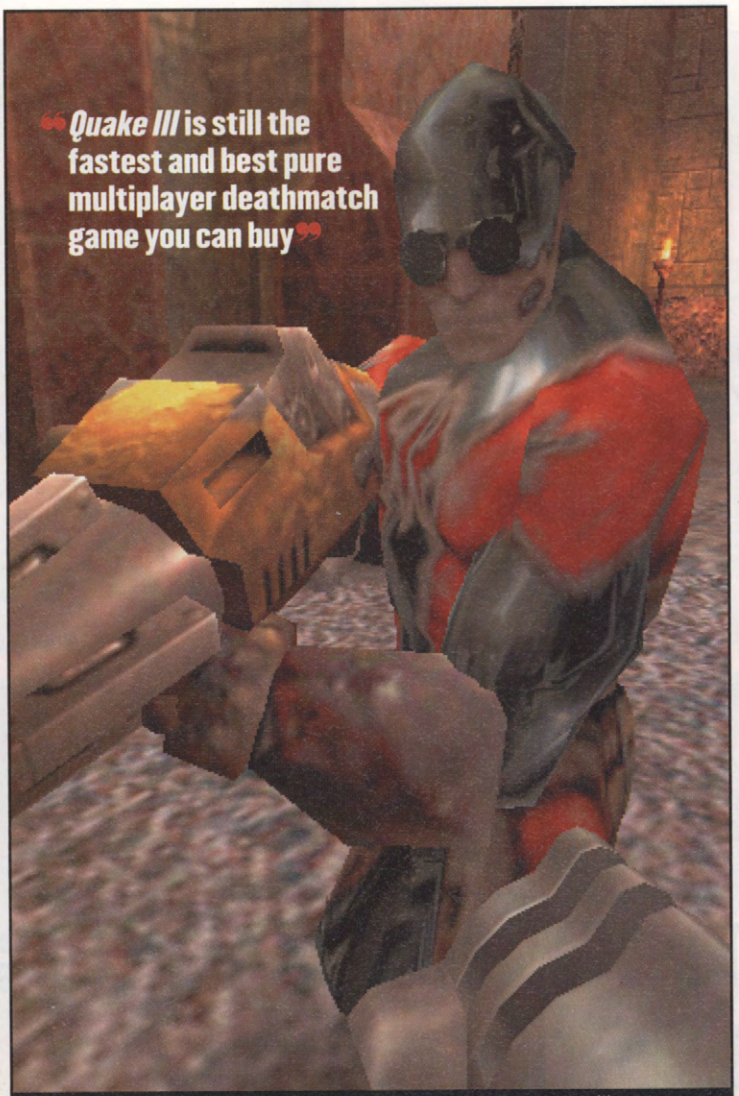
200 GAMES PREVIEWED



90 PLANESCAPE TORMENT Fancy messing around with corpses?

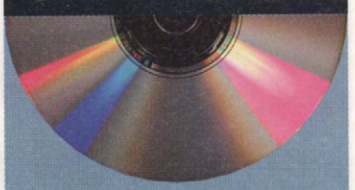


88 LE MANS Have you got what it takes for high-speed endurance racing?



84 QUAKE III ARENA Is it better than *Unreal Tournament*? Find out here with our comprehensive review, and then try our exclusive demo on this month's cover CD.

ON THE CD



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That silvery thing on the cover is loaded with great demos, patches and helpful files guaranteed to ensure you get more out of your PC

DON'T MISS DEMOS OF...

QUAKE III ARENA – EXCLUSIVE! TRY IT FOR YOURSELF HERE.
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URBAN CHAOS
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SUPREME SNOWBOARDING
THE LONGEST JOURNEY
FIFA 2000

PLUS
The latest update from Savio for *CM3*, along with patches for *Dungeon Keeper 2*, *Half-Life: Opposing Force*, *Rogue Spear*, *Shadow Company* and *Spec Ops II*.

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Our team of renowned experts review all the latest and greatest PC games

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Are you ready for the ultimate supertest? From all the PC games ever released we've narrowed the field down to a shortlist of ten. Which one is going to be crowned game of the millennium?

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Lots of stuff about stuff. Or something

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Bug-fix patch wins full release? Chimps clone *Pac-Man* coin-op? This is the future gone mad, courtesy of Charlie Brooker.

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Your 56K modem is about to become obsolete. Find out about the new breed of affordable high-speed connections.

104 GREAT EXPECTATIONS
You're the real experts, which is why we've given you the chance to tell us what the new millennium is going to hold.

108 THE FUTURE OF 3D GAMING
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135 THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO...
20 top developers spill the beans about the future of games on the PC.

Check the Future of Gaming for the latest 3D graphics cards and their rather natty new tricks.



2000 AND BEYOND

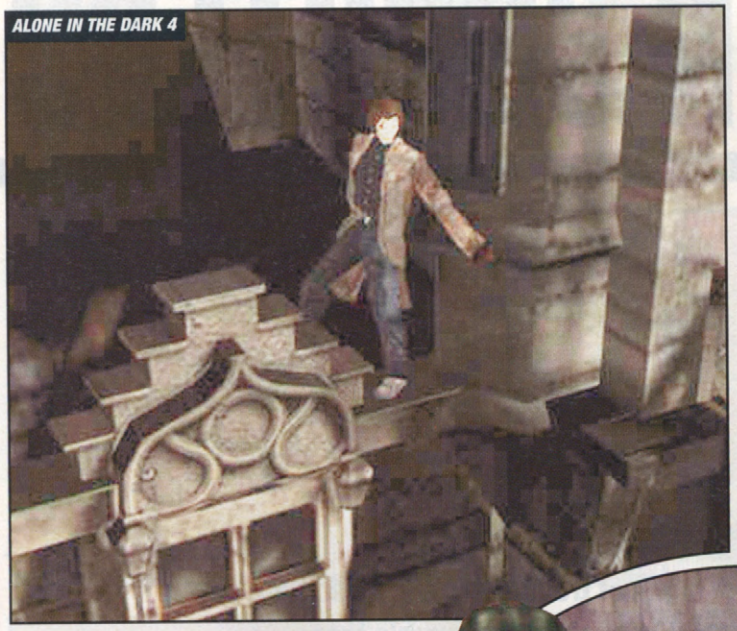
IF YOU THOUGHT 1999 WAS GOOD FOR GAMING, JUST LOOK AT WHAT THE NEXT MILLENNIUM HOLDS. WE'VE GOT PREVIEWS OF 200 OF THE HOTTEST GAMES THAT ARE GOING TO BLOW YOU AWAY OVER THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS...

It's been quite a year for games. *System Shock 2*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Championship Manager 3* and *Age Of Empires II* – not a bad collection to have permanently installed on your hard drive. *Quake III* has also arrived just in time for Christmas and you can read our comprehensive review starting on page 84. *Daikatana* (surprise, surprise) and *Ultima Ascension* missed out on the lucrative festive season and should be in the shops before the frost has thawed. But what about the rest of next year? What's going to be rocking your boat in the 21st Century?

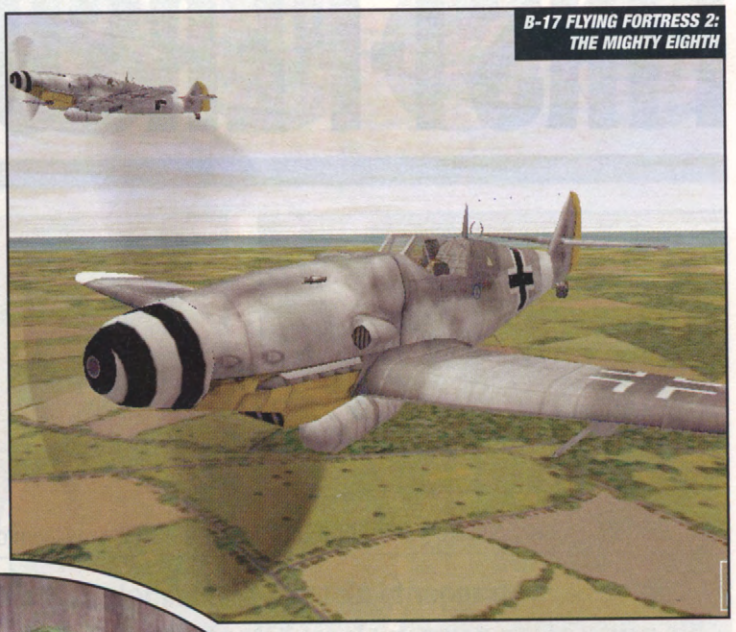
We've scoured the four corners of the globe to bring you news on the hottest 200 games currently in development. We've tracked down all the latest screenshots and inside information, so you can see for yourself the games that you're going to be playing and reading about over the next couple of years.

To help you get your hands on the games you're most interested in we've split them into seven distinct categories: first-person shooters, strategy, action/adventure, driving, role-playing games, flight/military and sports. For each section we've pulled out the one title that we think is going to have the most impact on the genre – put all these together and you've got the games that are going to set the standard for the new millennium. So, what are you waiting for? And for God's sake don't say *Daikatana*.

ALONE IN THE DARK 4



B-17 FLYING FORTRESS 2: THE MIGHTY EIGHTH



DIABLO II





TEAM FORTRESS 2: BROTHERHOOD OF ARMS

PRINCE NASEEM BOXING



WARCRAFT III



GRAND PRIX 3



FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

TEAM FORTRESS 2: BROTHERHOOD OF ARMS

DEVELOPER Valve Software • PUBLISHER Sierra • WEBSITE www.teamfortress.com • OUT Spring 2000

***Phil Wand* is no stranger to diving into a foxhole at the first signs of trouble – "Talk, walk, fight – it's a way of life down my local." He should be well qualified to spot a good rumble then...**

CLASSES

Here's a quick glance at just some of the player classes available in *Team Fortress 2*

COMMANDER

Commander class dictates squad strategy by observing the ensuing battle from above. Players control him in much the same way as in *Tiberian Sun*, allowing real-time positioning of troops, setting of waypoints, and supplying information to ensure the whole team's victory.

INFANTRY

Comprising of Light Infantry, Field Medic, Rocket Infantry and Heavy Infantry, this is the class that provides most of the meat in battle. All are suitably equipped with weapons such as the M16-A2 machine gun, M240G heavy machine gun and RPG.

COMMANDO

Equipped with a grenade launcher and plastique, Commandos are able to blow away walls with a well-timed blast. Useful to back up the Infantry classes with noise and destruction.

ENGINEER

***TF2* totally invigorates the Engineer class, enabling him to build an unlimited number of structures, from power generators and ammo dumps to sentry guns and remote cameras – all of which deplete the team's overall power supply.**

SNIPER

Everyone's favourite, the Sniper is perfect for sitting in a dark corner and picking off distant targets. As a class, it is perhaps unique in being able to wholly destroy the morale of an advancing squad.



SPY

Familiar to existing *Team Fortress* players, the Spy is able to infiltrate and assassinate by disguising himself as the enemy. Best used to creep up alongside snipers, knife them in the back and then take off.

After many long, blurry-eyed nights of co-operative *Doom*, the first-person gaming world decided that Deathmatch – beefy marines running around maps, scoffing all the toys and letting loose at anything that moved – was the way forward. Most of us went along for the adrenaline, but secretly we yearned to work *alongside* other people instead of whisking their innards into a soufflé. We wanted to shout orders. Yell for help. Go on reconnaissance missions. Be choosy about gobbling power-ups in case someone else needed them. Remember that warm, fuzzy feeling when you gave up the plasma rifle to a friend who had nothing but a pistol? Sure you do. Because, like us, you wanted to feel part of a close-knit crew.



The rate of fire increases if you have a medic on hand to help you feed in the ammo.

When *Quake* arrived, it was a bit of a let down. No, it was *a lot* of a let down. Many gamers considered it a step back from the co-operative nature of *Doom*, and left in droves for the likes of *Duke Nukem* and *Hexen* where the old team spirit was still alive. Just as they all upped and went, though, Aussie programmers Robin Walker, John Cook and Ian Caughley came up with the now legendary *Team Fortress* mod for *Quake*. Suddenly id's rather introverted blast 'em up had been transformed into a massive, online, multiplayer experience with different player classes, unique weapons, and a single goal for the whole team. The maps were also designed to enhance this teamplay aspect and also...

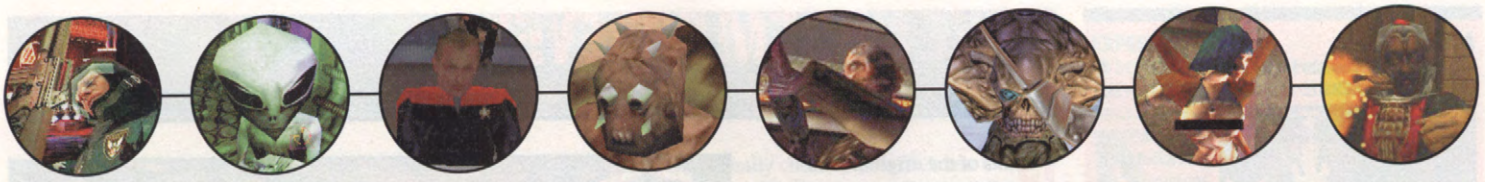
STRATEGY

It's considered a dirty word in action circles, but strategy is still the core component of every *Team Fortress* game, whether running under *Quake*, *Half-Life* or standalone in the form of *Team Fortress 2*. And it's strategy that *TF2* has as its building block. "Player objectives will be simple enough for new players to understand," says Rob Walker, the game's lead designer, "but complex enough for more experienced players to organise themselves and do a whole lot more than just shoot each other."

The game will ship with around 20 maps and four separate campaigns, each designed to highlight one of the many strains of gameplay, including Capture the Flag, Territorial Control and Escort. One variation includes a scenario where all players start out as engineers working together to build structures that unlock new classes. Sadly, and perhaps a little worryingly, rumour has it that there will be no 2Fort variants (small maps where two bases face each other). "Multiplayer gaming is all about interacting with people," continues Rob. "So we're spending a great deal of our time creating environments for players to interact in. We're putting people into situations where success relies on them working together as a team. Most of the current maps simply don't do that."

But that doesn't mean you *have* to interact or *have* to work together. Unlike previous incarnations, *TF2* will come fully loaded with intelligent AI players, based around the frighteningly realistic core code from *Half-Life*, with each bot able to use any of the different classes. So you could, for example, arrange a 16-player game where you are the only 'real' participant, and leave the teamwork side of things up to your CPU.

Another diversion from the past is that individual kills won't show up. The only score that counts is the score you get as a team, which will further distance the game from straight Deathmatch. Before you moan, think about it for a second: picture yourself



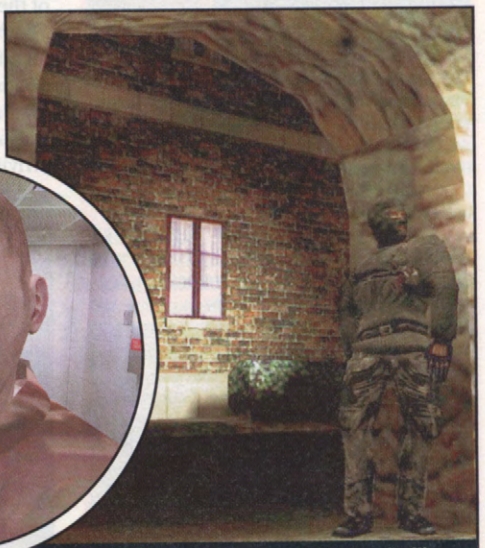


"Keep 'em busy Tyrone, and we'll sneak round the back."

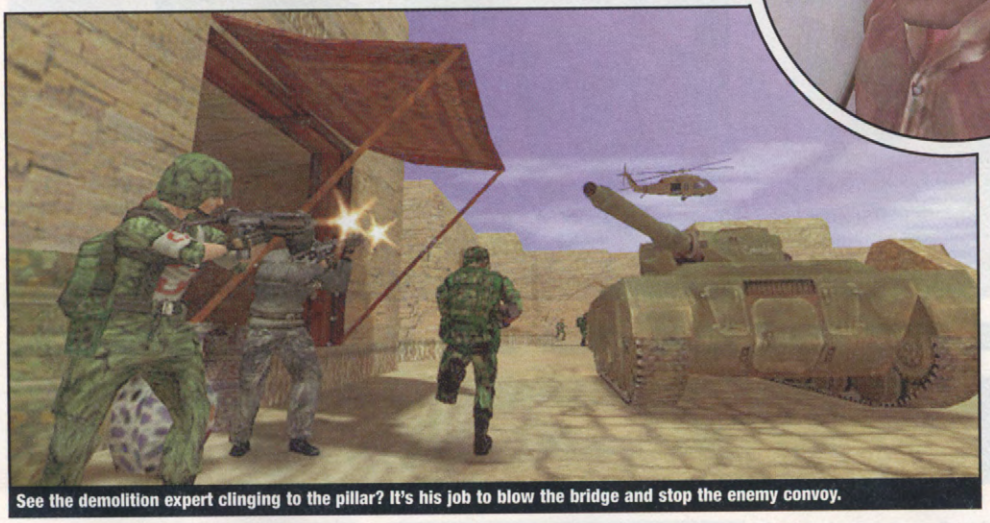


A squad work together to infiltrate an enemy building.





Another payload jumps from an APC to meet with heavy resistance from enemy troops.



See the demolition expert clinging to the pillar? It's his job to blow the bridge and stop the enemy convoy.

playing the *TF2* Beach Assault campaign, based on the Normandy invasions of 1944. Notching up masses of frags would be pretty meaningless if the raid fails and your team loses, wouldn't it?

ENGINE

Existing versions of *Team Fortress* have been limited somewhat by the underlying graphics engine, whether it be *Quake* or *Half-Life*, with player classes restricted to standard game models and overlaid with variable colour skins. In *TF2*, though, everything changes. The new software powerhouse is a modified version of the original *Half-Life* code (itself a modified version of id Software's *Quake* engine) and able to use top-quality textures and effects. As long as you have a suitably beefy 3D accelerator card, such as a 3Dfx Voodoo3 or Riva TNT2, you'll be able to experience *TF2* as it was meant to be experienced.

Teams are no longer colour coded red and blue, and will instead be identified by a combination of uniforms and urban, desert, jungle or Arctic camouflage. Each class is built around a unique skeleton, making around 32 new models in total, and you'll be able to download and use individual skins to identify yourself from other players in the same class, making an almost infinite number of different combinations.

The parametric animation system used for the skeletons is an astonishing leap forward for the first-person genre, and looks as though it could be way in advance of anything *Quake III Arena* has to offer. Complex movements can now be rendered in real time, and Valve have used this to inject added realism to the whole experience. Squads caught in the blast of explosions are thrown up and forward with an obvious jolt, reaching out to break their fall. When they hit the ground with a bump, their limbs are thrown backwards by the impact. You'd think that you were watching a glossy cut-scene rather than the genuine, on-the-fly, in-game action.

"The parametric animation system used for the skeletons is an astonishing leap forward for the first-person genre"

TF2 also promises to add vehicles such as tanks, helicopters, armoured personnel carriers and submersibles. But as with so many aspects of the game, the exact line-up of features has yet to be confirmed – and it's for this reason you shouldn't wrinkle your nose and prejudge it. We *know* it looks overly elaborate, we *know* it's a massive leap from the simplicity of *Team Fortress Classic*, but that shouldn't put you off. Valve know their market like no other developer, and are renowned for getting things right. Just wait and see, okay? PCZ

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

As *Team Fortress 2* is still being screwed together, what about some of the team-based action games you can go and buy off the shelf later today? Are they going to wilt in the shadow of Valve's looming giant?

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Recently released team-based action shooter built around the exquisite *Unreal* graphics engine. Features a long rack of juicy new weapons, decent maps and all manner of multiplayer options. Unfortunately, it lacks that inexplicable 'real-life smoothness' of Valve's game engine, and instead plays more like *Quake*.

TRIBES

With a super-slick graphics engine, a server capable of playing host to 64 simultaneous gamers, *Tribes* looked like being a sure-fire hit. In terms of US sales, it was. Against *Team Fortress 2*, though, *Tribes* looks a little rusty round the wheel arches. The landscapes are bland, the graphics weak, the gameplay a little uninvolving and the weaponry rather dull.

TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

While you're waiting for *Brotherhood Of Arms*, why not try *Team Fortress Classic*? Those of you with a copy of *Half-Life* and the 1.0.1.3 update patch on our cover CD will already have it lurking on your system. As with many people, it'll cause you to have doubts about its sequel – could *TF2* end up too complex to be fun?

QUAKE 2

Old but gold, *Quake* still pulls in the sales. And it's not hard to see why: heavy, noisy, frantic, visceral action, combined with solid gameplay and massive online support. Modifications such as the first *Team Fortress* and *Action Quake* are still popular. For many, though, it could have been so much more – and wasn't.

ALICE

DEVELOPER American McGee • **PUBLISHER** Electronic Arts • **WEBSITE** alice.ea.com • **OUT** Late 2000



Looking somewhat malevolent in appearance, *Alice* is based around Lewis Carroll's books and exploits the *Quake III* engine. You respond to a mysterious summons to return to Wonderland, and realise that something has gone very wrong: diseased atmosphere, confusion and mortal danger surround you. It's up to you to put the Queen of Hearts in her proper place. Nasty toys, vicious-looking creatures, disturbing arenas and devious puzzles give the whole thing a distinctly unhinged feel.

GANGSTER

DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks • **PUBLISHER** Take 2 Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.illusionsoftworks.com • **OUT** Early 2000

Illusion Softworks are the only professional computer games developers based in the Czech and Slovak Republic, and are responsible for *Hidden & Dangerous* (*PCZ* #79, 91%). Very little is known about *Gangster*, but we're pretty sure it'll use the same graphical powerplant behind *Hidden & Dangerous* and the fab-looking *Flying Heroes*. This means particle effects, multiplayer support, dynamic lighting, and various other treats. All from an Eastern European company who've been in business less than two years.

HALF-LIFE 2

DEVELOPER Valve • **PUBLISHER** Sierra • **WEBSITE** www.valvesoftware.com • **OUT** Late 2000

Question: how would you top *Half-Life*? We can only guess at the answer, because Valve are saying nothing about the sequel to the finest first-person shooter ever. What we do know is that Sierra's games department is being headed up by Mark Hood, the guy behind titles such as *SWAT 3D*, *Pharaoh*, and numerous Sierra hits from the past. With *Team Fortress 2* looking so good, *Half-Life 2* will be better than sex. We guarantee it.

DAIKATANA

DEVELOPER Ion Storm • **PUBLISHER** Eidos • **WEBSITE** www.ionstorm.com • **OUT** Your guess is as good as ours



It's getting beyond a joke now. **Daikatana** still isn't with us, despite the promise of review code for the January issue. (Eagle-eyed readers might have noticed it on our cover.) It's still not here and we're starting to wonder if Romero's **Quake**-beater actually exists. Don't expect to see a review next month and you won't be disappointed.

10SIX

DEVELOPER Segasoft • **PUBLISHER** SegaSoft • **WEBSITE** www.heat.net/10six/ • **OUT** TBC



With up to one million people taking part in the same game, *10SIX* is the biggest and most ambitious multiplayer project to date. The game itself is an action/strategy hybrid – think *Battlezone II* online and you won't be far off the reality. You can sign up to take part in the public beta test at the following address: www.heat.net/10six/

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

DEVELOPER 3D Realms Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** GT Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.dukenukem.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

Fans of the original hard-talking hard man of action games, Duke Nukem, are some of the most loyal you'll find. They've been waiting patiently for a follow-up to *Duke Nukem 3D* for close to four years now. *Duke Nukem 4*, officially titled *Duke Nukem Forever*, will be arriving some time next year and will use Epic Games' slick *Unreal* engine. The story for the game is this: Duke Nukem's arch nemesis, the cyborg Doctor Proton, has taken over Area 51, Las Vegas, and the surrounding areas. The Doc is using alien artefacts from Area 51 to contact aliens from around the galaxy and recruit them into his evil army. Naturally, the only dude with big enough balls to stand in his way is Duke. Promised is the usual array of beefy weaponry, including a variation of the original Shrinker gun, and numerous multiplayer options and Internet compatibility. Also hinted at is co-operative play, which is 'a distinct possibility'.





The Duke is back – and after all of this time, he's still no friendlier.

Parking is still a major problem in the drive-by shooting world inhabited by Duke Nukem.

X-COM ALLIANCE

DEVELOPER MicroProse • **PUBLISHER** Hasbro Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.microprose.com • **OUT** Early 2000

Another first-person shooter based around the *Unreal* engine, *X-COM Alliance* is a significant departure from the turn-based strategy of all its predecessors. The plot and gameplay, though, should be familiar to existing players. It's the year 2062, and you're put in the boots of a marine who's leading a squad to recover supplies from the final battle scene of the first *X-COM* outing. One wormhole, 60 light years and several aspirins later, you find yourself stuck in the middle of an intergalactic battle between two alien nations. It's your job to search the alien ships on both sides, recover artefacts and find a way back to Earth through 15 or so missions. *X-COM Alliance* should retain a strong strategy element with players able to command and organise squads, with your stranded ship, the SS Patton, acting as your base from which you select and equip your men and research into new technologies.



Despite being a shooter, it retains that distinct *X-COM* look.



What he lacks in height, he makes up for in weaponry.

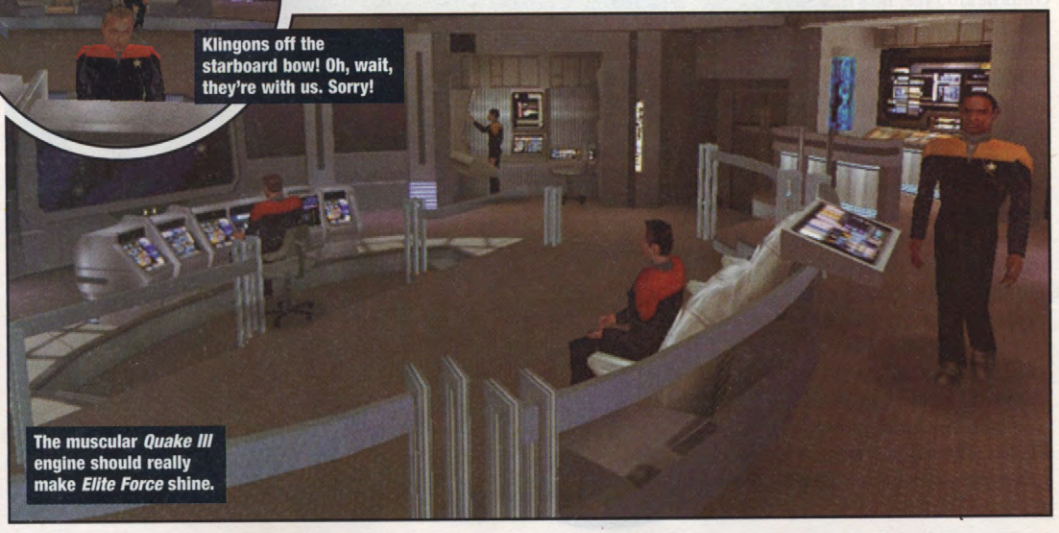
STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

DEVELOPER Raven Software • **PUBLISHER** Activision •**WEBSITE** www.ravensoft.com • **OUT** Summer 2000

Having kept everyone guessing with their choice of graphics engine, Raven finally chose Quake *III Arena* to underpin their upcoming title, *Elite Force*. Hyped as the ultimate science fiction first-person shooter, it's the first title licensed from Paramount to be based around the *Star Trek: Voyager* universe. The game places you aboard the USS Voyager as a member of an elite security force, the Hazard Team. After an alien species beams aboard and takes control of the ship, it's up to you and your cohorts to defend the ship, rescue the situation and save the universe. Led by Commander Tuvok, you'll go up against a variety of enemies and switch to a number of different locations, including deep inside a Borg cube. Missions will include solo play and team based challenges, with full multiplayer options to include Capture the Flag, Free For All and Holomatch variants.



Klingons off the starboard bow! Oh, wait, they're with us. Sorry!



The muscular *Quake III* engine should really make *Elite Force* shine.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

DEVELOPER Raven Software • **PUBLISHER** Activision • **WEBSITE** www.activision.com • **OUT** February 2000



It's only 'armless fun. Yuk-yuk!



Best check the dental records then.



Never let it be said that Raven like to prey on stereotypical images of gung-ho, American gun-lovers in bandanas and Harley T-shirts. Oops, too late.

Licensed from the US gun fetish mag of the same name, *Soldier Of Fortune* attempts to weave traditional mission-based gameplay into a contemporary setting. Taking you halfway across the world, it casts you as a 'consultant' hired by the US Government to track down four stolen nukes. With 26 levels to tote over 10 guns around, it's basically you against terrorists (and a few dogs – which will please Steve Hill), armed with guns that look real, that controversially expose real-looking innards on successful operation of the trigger. It's not short on multiplayer options either, with arcade, team and realistic deathmatching, capture-the-flag and more besides. It may use the old *Quake II* engine, but *Half-Life* used *Quake I*. And we all know how well that turned out. Things are looking good for *Soldier Of Fortune*. All will be revealed next month when we should have the full review

EXPERIENCE

DEVELOPER The Whole Experience • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.experience3d.com • **OUT** Summer 2000



A role-playing action shooter, *Experience* looks more like reality than fantasy. But the mighty WXP3D engine behind the sci-fi blast promises more besides arresting visuals. It allows you to interact with creatures you meet – if they like you, you'll even be able to ride them. WXP3D supersedes *Quake* and *Half-Life* by being fully customisable, so game mods, total conversions and licensing may give the title serious longevity.

NAVY SEALS

DEVELOPER Codemasters • **PUBLISHER** Codemasters • **WEBSITE** www.codemasters.com • **OUT** Summer 2000



Codemasters have recently established a satellite development studio based in Oakhurst, California, on the edge of the Yosemite National Park. The main project line will involve the revival of the squad-based tactical simulation *Navy SEALs* after the original development house closed down. The game will draw on the experiences of former SEAL and best-selling author Richard Marcinko, ensuring authentic gameplay, realistic settings and true-to-life weaponry, and should be available towards the middle of 2000.

WOLFENSTEIN 2000

DEVELOPER Xatrix Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** TBA **WEBSITE** www.xatrix.com • **OUT** End 2000

It's been some time since we glided up and down square corridors, searched square rooms, and shot at square-headed enemies who shouted "*Spion!*" every time they saw us. Looking back, it all seems rather humdrum alongside the likes of *Half-Life* and *Unreal Tournament*. Rumour is that Xatrix, the development team behind *Kingpin*, will transport us back to 1940s Germany with the *Quake*-powered *Castle Wolfenstein 2000*. Given modern graphics technology, it should be quite a trip.

UNREAL 2

DEVELOPER Legend • **PUBLISHER** GT Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.legendent.com • **OUT** Late 2000

Unreal 2 is currently on the factory floor at Legend Entertainment, the small but successful software team behind *The Wheel Of Time*, *Mission Critical* and the *Unreal Level Pack*. Although GT Interactive will publish it as an Epic MegaGames title, all the hard work is being carried out on their behalf by Legend. The upcoming sequel, due towards Christmas next year, will use all new technology, new enemies and titillating weaponry – something the original game lacked.

WARHAMMER 40K: AGENTS OF DEATH

DEVELOPER Mirage Media • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.mirage.com.pl • **OUT** Spring 2000



Warsaw-based Mirage Media are using their luscious *Mortyr 2* game engine as the basis for a new first-person shooter due in a couple of months. Fashioned around the Warhammer universe, and licensed from Games Workshop, *Warhammer 40,000: Agents Of Death* features all the characters, visuals, audio and locations from the popular Warhammer world. As yet to sign a publishing contract, the GW licence and early screenshots should be enough to secure a deal.

PROJECT V1

DEVELOPER Digital Platoon • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.digitalplatoon.com • **OUT** Early 2000



Relive authentic SEAL missions with guerrilla-style warfare, advanced combat tactics, hostage snatching and heavy reliance on your team mates. Missions in *Project V1* promise to take players from land to sea and from sea to air, and to take advantage of ultra-realistic combat items. Flares are set to make night combat a hoot, and LAN options will allow head-to-head or teamwork play.

HIRED GUNS

DEVELOPER VR1 • **PUBLISHER** GT Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.vr1.com • **OUT** Early 2000



A futuristic shooter set in a neon-soaked cyberpunk world that uses the *Unreal* engine for its visuals. A unique quad-screen, multi-windowed interface allows players to control a squad of four mercenaries, making an interesting variation of the action/strategy genre. Co-operative multiplayer features will be a welcome addition, as will team play and strategy. Each squad member has different skills and abilities and, with the developers using *Half-Life* as their benchmark, we should be in for a treat.

PRIVATE WARS

DEVELOPER TS Group Inc. • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.tsgroup-inc.com • **OUT** Early 2000



Taking place in a '90s real world setting, *Private Wars* is a squad-based combat shooter where you, a mercenary, get to tackle a variety of real world threats, from Colombian drug barons to Middle East terrorists. Missions involve industrial espionage, VIP kidnappings and border conflicts – the kind of exciting stuff you get to see regularly on the *Nine O'clock News*. The game has the *Eternity* graphics engine under the hood providing all the slick visuals.

NO-ONE LIVES FOREVER

DEVELOPER Monolith Interactive • **PUBLISHER** Microids • **WEBSITE** www.lith.com • **OUT** Autumn 2000



With over-the-top style Bond action and wry humour, *No-One Lives Forever* is an action pastiche of pretty much every 007 flick from the 1960s. As Adam Church, you play an impossibly suave, debonair agent for MI-Zero, Her Majesty's Most Secret Service. The game features more than 20 weapons and some extravagant gadgetry that even Q would be proud of. The MonoLith engine supplies the retro '60s looks and glorious settings from sunken freighters to casino halls.

SPEC OPS III

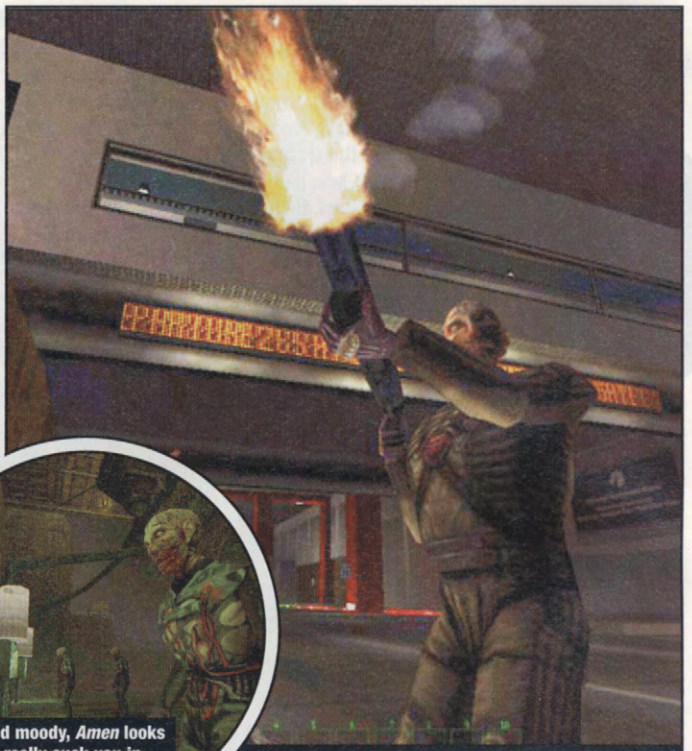
DEVELOPER Zombie •**PUBLISHER** TBC • **WEBSITE** www.zombie.co • **OUT** TBC

We've only just reviewed *Spec Ops II* but that doesn't mean the developers are sitting back and taking a well-earned break. No sir, instead they're hard at work creating *Spec Ops III* for your delectation. No rangers this time around. Instead expect *Navy Seals* rendered in the glorious *LithTech 2* engine.

AMEN: THE AWAKENING

DEVELOPER Cavedog • **PUBLISHER** GT Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.cavedog.com • **OUT** Early 2000

Using something called the Amengine for its graphical thrust, Cavedog's blast looks nothing short of fabulous. The plot opens with a murderous derangement awakening – hence the name – within a third of the world's population. In the following confusion, millions end up dead. Enter the hero of the hour, Bishop Six, an incredibly dedicated SAS commando (yes, he's British) who takes command of a military strike force and attempts to wrestle back control of the planet from the hands of nutters. *Amen: The Awakening* takes place across 12 massive levels nearly ten times the size of the average first person arena. Challenges await you at every corner, from simple monkey-puzzle stuff to quandaries that wouldn't look out of place in the average adventure game. Each environment you enter is realistically built using a brand new software platform and features a variety of locations, such as subway systems, airports, and military complexes.

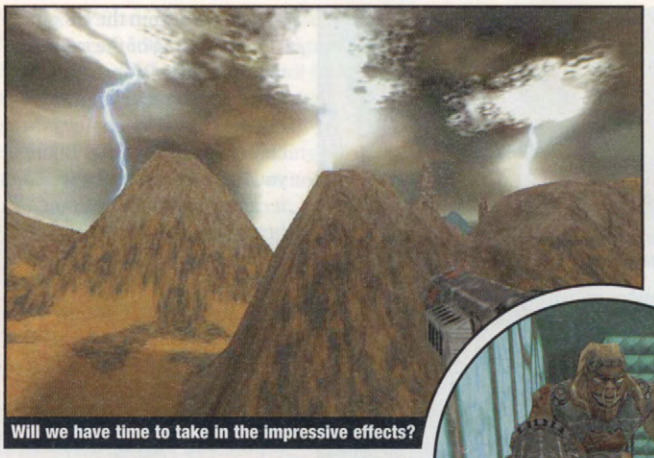


Some thug lets loose with a gun straight off the side of an Apache chopper.

Dark and moody, *Amen* looks like it'll really suck you in.

TRIBES 2

DEVELOPER Dynamix • **PUBLISHER** Dynamix • **WEBSITE** www.tribesplayers.com **OUT** Early 2000



Will we have time to take in the impressive effects?



New races and extra vehicles for *Tribes 2*.



Thankfully the *Extreme* elements of single-player *Tribes* will be in the sequel.

Do you want the good news or the bad news first? On a dark note, Dynamix have cancelled *Tribes Extreme*, which promised to add single-player training campaigns to the world of Starsiege. Thankfully, most of the work is going to be transferred to the full-on sequel, *Tribes 2*.

Tribes 2 is also going to look stunning, with an enhanced engine that promises new tactical obstacles such as water and dense foliage. There are also new weather effects, such as clouds and random lightning bolts that can strike you in the air and on the ground, and new vehicles including a ground version of the scout vehicle and a turreted assault vehicle. Voice support is going to be present and correct, which should add the final piece of the online jigsaw.

The ability to communicate without stopping and typing should render the team-based missions unmissable.

The first *Tribes* never enjoyed the success here that it did in the States, but hopefully cheap and free Internet access, mixed with AI-controlled bots, should make the difference for the sequel.

PREY

DEVELOPER 3D Realms • **PUBLISHER** GT Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.3drealms.com • **OUT** TBC



It looks a lot like *Quake*, but with nothing going on.

Just look at those, er... textures.

One of the most talked about first-person titles, and originally billed as a *Quake* killer, *Prey* has now been shaded by other, better looking and seemingly more exciting titles. Work on it was halted in December 1998 after the development team shuffled over to the *Duke Nukem* offices to complete the code there, yet people are still babbling about it as though it will rise from the ashes and conquer the world. Fat chance. Mind you, the game technology remains pretty radical, with the *PreyOS* operating system being used to provide a framework for game code. It was designed to make licensing a cinch, but the arrival of *Half-Life* and *Quake III* killed it dead in the water. Maybe one day you'll be able to step into the shoes of Talon Brave, an American Indian who gets to battle three alien species but, right now, the sensible money would be on it being canned.

THIEF 2: THE METAL AGE

DEVELOPER Looking Glass • **PUBLISHER** Eidos Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.eidos.co.uk • **OUT** Spring 2000

Thief: The Dark Project was a great game, but one with several obvious flaws – lack of a multiplayer option being one of them. Even after rave reviews, it remained a curiously-low key affair, with many gamers unaware of its praise worthiness even today. Undeterred, developers Looking Glass went ahead with plans for another, listening to every criticism of their original code. By way of response to their critics, they've gone and created a stunning-looking sequel based on the same core code as the awesome *System Shock 2*. Naturally, the new title features multiplayer, and will even include a new co-operative mode where players have to work together to get through missions. There will also be multiplayer-specific mission objectives and challenges that require collaboration to win through. There's a swarm of new player items promised, although the development team are being careful to retain the original *Thief*'s brilliantly balanced gameplay.



The Darker Project?

Exploding cufflinks, the ideal Christmas gift.

RUNE

DEVELOPER Human Head • **PUBLISHER** Gathering of Developers • **WEBSITE** www.godgames.com • **OUT** Late 2000



Using an enhanced version of the *Unreal* engine and being developed in partnership with Epic MegaGames, *Rune* is a game based on the myths and legends of the Vikings. Here players must solve the secret of the Dark Vikings and explore areas ranging from the underworld kingdoms and mountains of the Dark Vikings to vast Dwarven forests and beyond. Much of the weaponry is for close combat, with particular focus on swordsmanship, knives, clubs and axes.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks • **PUBLISHER** Take 2 Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.illusionsoftworks.com • **OUT** Late 2000

After Czech-based developers Illusion Softworks signed with distributors Take 2 Interactive, they began work on an augmented games line-up. As well as finishing a Dreamcast version of *Hidden & Dangerous*, they're contracted to produce a PC mission pack for the title, as well as *Hidden & Dangerous 2*. Nobody is saying anything about the sequel, but given the success of the original, we believe it'll be another jewel in the first-person crown.

SPELLBINDER: THE NEXUS CONFLICT

DEVELOPER Mythic/Centropolis • **PUBLISHER** TBA **WEBSITE** www.mythicgames.com • **OUT** Late 2000



Based around the Rolemaster pen and paper game, Mythic's latest, *Spellbinder* will allow thousands of players to blast away online with close to 200 spells and effects, and four unique character classes within six architecturally distinct arenas. With the backing of Centropolis Entertainment, the people behind science fiction blockbusters such as *Independence Day* and *Godzilla*, and the engine from *Prince Of Persia 3D*, it should be a title worth waiting for.

DOOM 2000

DEVELOPER TeamTNT • **PUBLISHER** Activision • **WEBSITE** www.teamtnt.com • **OUT** Early 2000

Described as "arriving in time for you to have something to play on your computer after the power grids fail," there are many unanswered questions about *Doom 2000*. Like, exactly *how* do you play the game with no electricity? We know it's being put together by the same people who brought us *Final Doom*, and that it'll be based on original code, so don't expect jumping, crouching, or any of the other things you've come to rely on.

SEED

DEVELOPER Humansoft • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.seedgame.com • **OUT** TBC

Next time you play a first-person action game, try looking down at your feet. See, you don't have any. To all intents and purposes you are just a floating ball of flesh holding a gun. *Seed* hopes to change all that and combine 3D shooting with platform action, with where you place your feet being just as important as where you aim your guns. Intriguing, isn't it?

STAR WARS: OBI-WAN

DEVELOPER Lucasarts • **PUBLISHER** Activision • **WEBSITE** www.lucasarts.com • **OUT** Christmas 2000

Essentially this is *Dark Forces III* and the first *Star Wars* shooter to be based on *The Phantom Menace*. Or is it? By the time Obi-Wan comes out, the second episode of *Star Wars* will be upon us. Will we see Ewan taking on a young Darth Vader, or will he be training the little bleeder? More importantly, will we be able to finally sever *that* Gungan head? Answers *very* soon.

STRATEGY

WARCRAFT III

DEVELOPER Blizzard Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** Blizzard Entertainment • **WEBSITE** www.warcraft.com • **OUT** Winter 2000

After four long years, Blizzard are looking to redefine the strategy genre with their new offering. *Steve Hill* grows a beard in anticipation

When is a real-time strategy game not a real-time strategy game? When it's a role-playing strategy game, it would seem, as this is how Blizzard is touting the third instalment of its immensely popular *Warcraft* series.

Arguably its most highly anticipated title ever, *Warcraft III* represents something of a departure from the current generation of real-time strategy games, as well as a sizeable leap from previous incarnations. Now in full 3D, as opposed to the top-down affairs of yore, *Warcraft III* can be conveniently described as a 3D RPS.

Clearly the very mention of role-playing is enough to send shudders down the spine of any normal, right-thinking person, with its connotations of real ale, unkempt facial hair, questionable personal hygiene and limited social outlets. However, by introducing role-playing elements to the *Warcraft* universe, Blizzard intends to elevate strategy games to a new level of interactivity.



Fearless knight... or novelty soap dispenser?

Instead of focusing on resource gathering and accumulating massive numbers of expendable units, it is hoped that *Warcraft III* will immerse players in a more dynamic world, making the game environment much more compelling. You will control smaller, more powerful forces as they embark on adventures, complete quests and interact with non-player characters, while simultaneously devising strategies to succeed in the ultimate goal of defeating your opponents.

It's an ambitious idea, but the game's producer, Rob Pardo, is convinced that it's the way forward.

"The guys didn't want to make the same game again. When we started, we didn't even call it *Warcraft III*. It was going to be a new game in the *Warcraft* universe. We've been arguing back and forth about whether to call it *Warcraft III*. We finally decided to call it *Warcraft III* because it takes place in the same world, and it is based on events of previous games. It is the sequel to *Warcraft II*, and it does have real-time strategy elements. We said as long as we make people understand the differences of this game, then we should call it *Warcraft III*."

So is the emphasis on strategy or role-playing?

"It is still primarily a strategy game. There will still be town management and resource management. The player will be building his units and heroes from their hometown and building up a tech-tree to enable higher end units. The main difference is that we want to add role-playing in an interesting way."

"Humans and orcs will be back, along with a debut appearance from demons, leading to all manner of other-worldly shenanigans"

KILL THE PRESIDENT

These comments were echoed by Mike Morhaime, president and co-founder of Blizzard, who was moved to announce: "With the release of *StarCraft*, we felt that we reached the pinnacle of what could be accomplished in the current generation of strategy titles. Our goal with *Warcraft III* is to carve out a new direction for strategy games by incorporating the interactive dynamics present in role-playing games and applying them in a competitive strategic combat environment."

Ah yes, combat – the crux of any decent strategy game. Until now, *Warcraft* has always been about orcs and humans kicking the living daylights out of each other in a quest for supremacy. *Warcraft III* is set to complicate things further by offering six different races, each with unique units, magical abilities and weapons of war. Blizzard is currently keeping its cards close to its chest, but we can confirm that humans and orcs will be back, along with a debut appearance from demons, leading to all manner of other-worldly shenanigans.

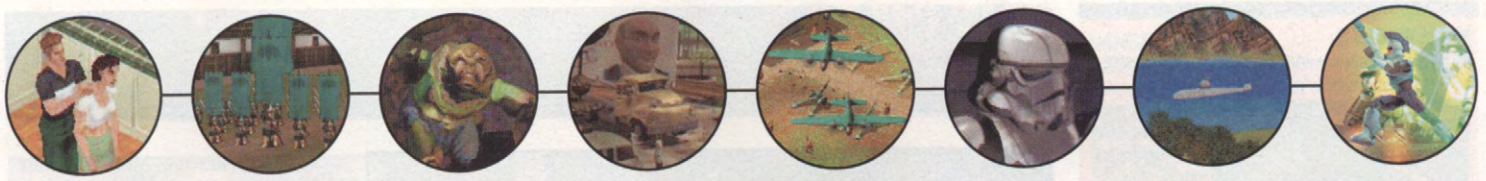
Rest assured that there will be plenty of scuffling, as Blizzard are aiming for a ratio of 30% base managing and troop organising, against 70% tactical combat, questing, and interacting with the world and NPCs, which is approximately the reverse of most RTS games.

With such emphasis placed upon it, clearly the combat will have to be something special. Whereas Blizzard's previous strategy games had normal units and heroes, *Warcraft III* will now have normal units, hero units, and named heroes. The named heroes will be unique and legendary characters that propel the story – much like Kerrigan and Zeratul in *Starcraft* – while the hero units will be the special units that you group your regular troops under.

Blizzard says there will be about six heroes per side, and that they will gain experience, advancing in level and power. Heroes will be vital because you won't be able to group or control units without them. You won't even be able to scroll around the map any more. Instead, you will only be able to jump views between towns and heroes. These heroes will gain extra abilities as they go up in level, and, as in *Diablo II*, they will be able to choose from a variety of skills as they advance in level.

WIZARD ALERT

During combat, there will be more options and, due to the emphasis on fewer units, less micro-management. Each unit will have a special skill so, for instance, the grunt will be able to go berserk, the minotaur will have a bull rush and the wolf rider will be able to throw nets. Budding wizards needn't feel left out, as there will still be traditional



spellcasters with even more advanced abilities.

As for the story, it carries on from *Warcraft II*, and is largely the kind of sub-Tolkien nonsense you'd expect. However, fans of the *Warcraft* universe may be interested to learn that it combines elements of the long-since ditched *Warcraft Adventures*, the developers at least culling something from the canned title, including a few characters.

The story is clearly something that Blizzard considers important, and Pardo says: "You saw some of that in *Starcraft*, and we're just taking it to the next level. There will be lots of in-game cut-scenes – both little ones and big ones. We'll go as far as our creativity lets us go. You see what *Half-Life* did to action games? I'd love to do that to strategy games."

It's an ambitious aim, but if anyone can, Blizzard can.



Role-playing strategy! Whatever will they think of next?



Never ones to stick to their own release dates, Blizzard will probably get *Warcraft III* out next year.

FIVE OF THE BEST

It's a crowded market, and here's what *Warcraft III* will be up against



HOMEWORLD (Sierra)
Redefined the RTS genre, this took strategy into the depths of outer space with unparalleled freedom of movement. Looks great, plays superbly. No wizards, though.



DUNGEON KEEPER 2 (Electronic Arts)
Bullfrog's original turned the goblin clichés on their head, and this sequel refined the gameplay and vastly improved the graphics.



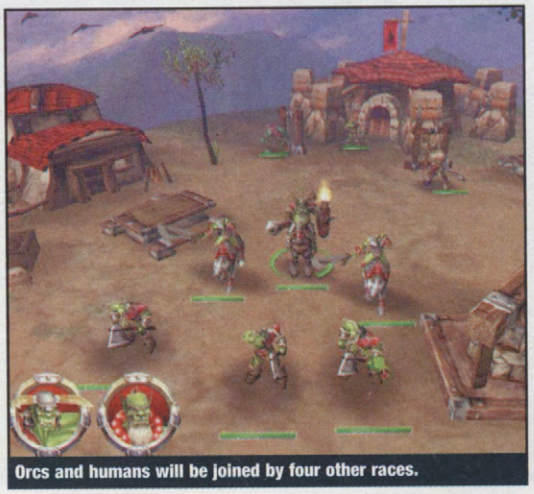
TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS (GT Interactive)
Wizards and archmages abound in this follow-up to the more orthodox warbound original. *Warcraft III* should be miles better.



AGE OF EMPIRES II: AGE OF KINGS (Microsoft)
Faster, stronger and better than before, *Warcraft III* is going to have to be pretty special to match this epoch-spanning classic.



MAGIC & MAYHEM (Virgin Interactive)
Goblins and ogres from the makers of *X-COM*. Still great, but *Warcraft III*'s full 3D engine should knock this into a pointy hat.



Orcs and humans will be joined by four other races.



Warcraft III's battles will be relatively small-scale.

HOMEWORLD 2

DEVELOPER Relic • **PUBLISHER** Sierra • **WEBSITE** www.sierra.com • **OUT** TBC



Homeworld might have been an intriguing and graphically impressive game, but the one thing it lacked was some kind of tangible atmosphere, offering no more than a generic version of space sci-fi tomfoolery. Throw a *Battlestar Galactica* licence into the mix, though, and it's a whole different ball game. Except for those too young to remember it. Or too old.

AGE OF EMPIRES III

DEVELOPER Ensemble • **PUBLISHER** Microsoft • **WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com • **OUT** TBA

The dust might still be settling on *Age Of Empires III: Age Of Kings*, but rest assured that Bruce Shelley and his team are already mulling over the possibilities for the difficult third instalment.

It's hard to see where they go from here, though, as they've covered pretty much every historical era. Perhaps they'll set it in the present day.

ALIEN BREED: CONFLICT

DEVELOPER Team 17 • **PUBLISHER** Hasbro • **WEBSITE** www.team17.com • **OUT** TBA



Team 17 have been flogging *Alien Breed* in a variety of guises for the best part of seven years. Originally a 1993 Amiga title, it was then released as *Alien Breed Special Edition*, setting a record of 33 unbroken weeks at No 1 in the UK Gallup charts. *Alien Breed 3D* appeared in 1996, and now they've gone all strategic on us with *Alien Breed: Conflict*.

BATTLE ISLE 4

DEVELOPER Cauldron • **PUBLISHER** Blue Byte • **WEBSITE** www.bluebyte.com • **OUT** Autumn 2000



Picking up seamlessly from the scenario of its predecessors, the fourth episode of the long-running strategy game takes place long after the 35-year-long Robot War from the inaugural *Battle Isle*. Peace has prevailed for a long time but peace doesn't make for much of a game, and *Battle Isle 4* will be a fantasy-filled, innovative strategy game in full 3D.

COMMANDOS 2

DEVELOPER Pyro Studios • **PUBLISHER** Eidos • **WEBSITE** www.eidos.co.uk • **OUT** TBA

Eidos have pumped a lot of money into Spanish developer Pyro Studios on the back of *Commandos*, and they will be hoping that its first proper sequel does similar business. The original *Commandos* camped out in the charts for about three months, and spawned an expansion pack. *Commandos 2* promises a change of direction, though, with a shift towards 3D.

DUNGEON SIEGE

DEVELOPER Gas Powered Games • **PUBLISHER** Microsoft • **WEBSITE** www.dungeonsiege.com • **OUT** Christmas 2000

Just announced is Chris '*Total Annihilation*' Taylor's first game since leaving Cavedog and setting up Gas Powered Games. *Dungeon Siege*, like *WarCraft III*, is a mix of role-playing and 3D strategy, with players able to develop dozens of characters side by side in a quest to undo the evil that has beset whatever land it is you find yourself in. When we hear more, we'll let you know.

THE SIMS

DEVELOPER Maxis • **PUBLISHER** Electronic Arts • **WEBSITE** www.ea.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



Waking up with the house on fire.



Geoff goes for the back door.

Seven years ago, Maxis founder Will Wright was toying with a rudimentary architectural program that would let people create their own virtual dream homes. Having neglected it in favour of a host of other sim games, it has now mutated into *The Sims* and is shaping up to be a high concept marriage of *SimCity* and *Tamagotchi*.

As the overseer of a neighbourhood of Sims, their lives are effectively in your hands and the idea is to help them find happiness, or alternately plunge them into a moribund existence of bitterness and despair. Homes for your Sims can either be bought or designed yourself, and then equipped with furniture, electronics, plumbing, lighting and other accessories necessary to keep your Sims happy. Once housed, they can interact with neighbours, form relationships, get married and pursue careers in fields such as business, entertainment, the military and politics. Just make sure they steer clear of journalism.

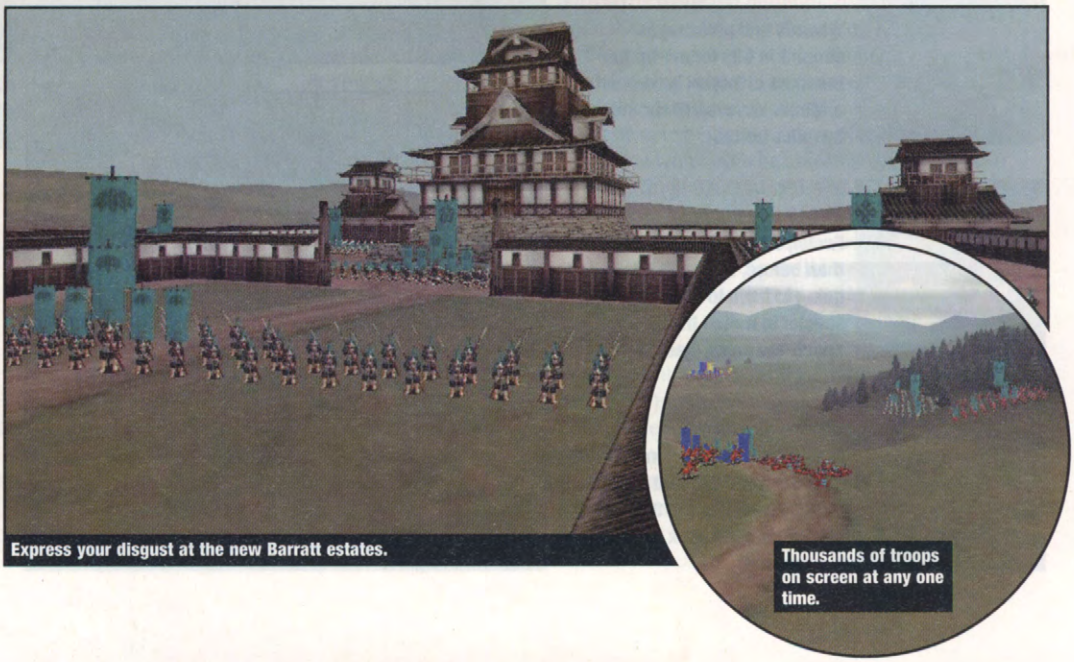
SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

DEVELOPER The Creative Assembly • **PUBLISHER** Electronic Arts • **WEBSITE** www.ea.com • **OUT** TBA

An epic real-time wargame, *Shogun: Total War* is based on the period of Japanese history known as Sengoku Jidai, which loosely translates as 'Age of the Country at War'.

During this time, rival factions led by feudal warlords, known as Daimyo, battled for military supremacy. Ultimately, one Daimyo united the country beneath his sword and became Shogun, aka The Daddy.

The game operates on two separate but seamlessly integrated levels. The strategic level features economics, politics, military development and tactical deployment of forces. When two armies meet, the perspective cuts to the real-time 3D battlefield, where players will view everything from the eyes of a scout, general or samurai, controlling as many as 5,000 individual warriors in battle. There will also be the option to play a quick, mission-based game, as well as a wide range of networked multiplayer options.



Express your disgust at the new Barratt estates.

Thousands of troops on screen at any one time.

SACRIFICE

DEVELOPER Shiny Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.shiny.com • **OUT** Summer 2000



Touched by the hand of God



It's the follow up to *Messiah*, don'tcha know?

Real-time strategy is set to enter a new dimension. Not only is *Sacrifice* in full spinny-rotatey 3D, but it has been designed specifically for proper wearing-silly-glasses-3D™.

We have seen it with our own eyes, and it's a beautiful thing, the vast expanses stretching into the distance and fully utilising the feeling of depth that the magic glasses provide.

As for the game itself, it's a full-on wizards and trolls affair, with giant dragons and sinister monoliths proliferating across the earth. In the wonderful and frightening world of *Sacrifice*, there are five gods who can bestow powers upon the good wizard, and the idea is to curry favour with them in order to earn spells. These range from simple creature spells and projectiles to some literally earth-shattering effects, such as tornadoes and volcanoes. Definitely worth a look, especially if you're a wizard.

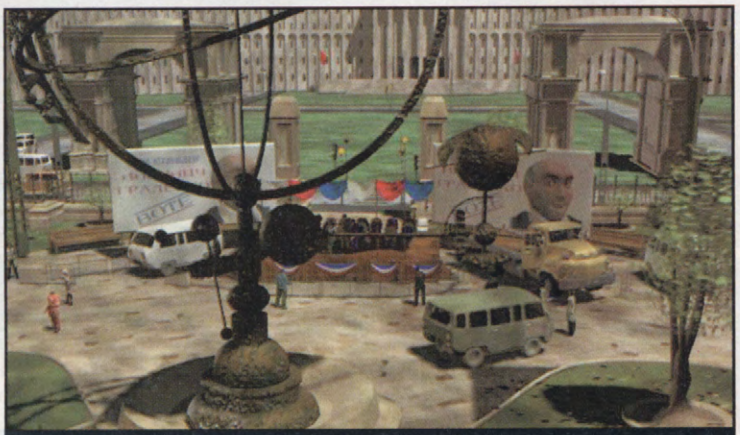
REPUBLIC

DEVELOPER Elixir Studios • **PUBLISHER** Eidos Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.elixir-studios.co.uk • **OUT** TBC

The debut title from *Theme Park* boy Demis Hassibis's start-up studio, *Republic,* is nothing if not ambitious. Refreshingly set in the 1990s, the game takes place just after the break up of the Soviet Union. Dozens of autonomous countries spring from the crumbling remnants, and it's into one of these, the Republic of Novistrana, that you enter the fray as a small-time faction leader intent on ousting the president.

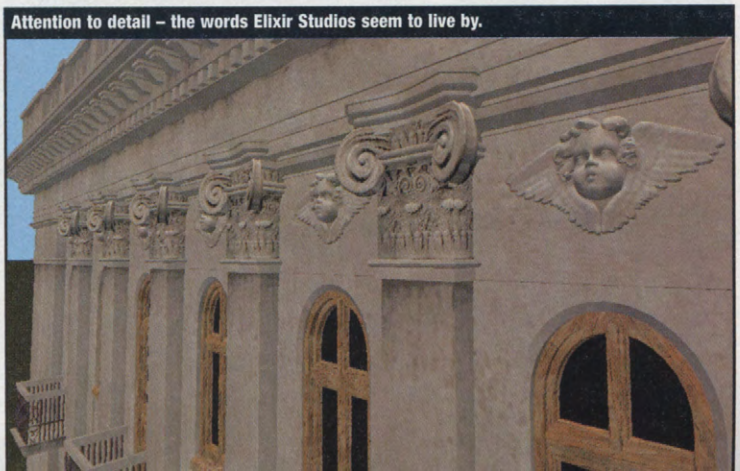
The so-called Novistrana is being created in totally freeform 3D, with Elixir claiming cinematic quality the likes of which have never been experienced before. Some 50 towns and cities will be rendered down to an incredible level of detail, and the country will be populated with a million living, breathing citizens, each with their own daily routines, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs and political leanings.

Fairly ambitious, then.



Sounds all well and good, but can you build theme parks?

Attention to detail – the words Elixir Studios seem to live by.



GANGSTERS 2

DEVELOPER Hothouse • **PUBLISHER** Eidos • **WEBSITE** www.eidos.co.uk • **OUT** Summer 2000



Pimping, gambling, setting about faces with baseball bats – all in a day's work for your typical real-world gangster. Offering more than just a day's play, however, is *Gangsters 2*, sequel to the faintly interesting *Gangsters*, where the aim will be to take over a number of Depression-era cities by any – ie illegal – means.

Extra features include new specialist characters to enlist, day and night cycles and a more streamlined interface. Will it be enough? Let's hope so.

EARTH2150

DEVELOPER TopWare Interactive• **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.earth2150.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



The sequel to *Earth 2140* will feature a completely 3D landscape, offering mountains to scale, protective bulwarks to dig and entire tunnel systems to create. The landscape can be deformed massively by explosions, and day-and-night cycles affect your strategy, with solar cells adapting to the varying intensity of the sun's rays. Throw in a non-linear structure offering some 90 missions, and it could be a winner.

GROUND CONTROL

DEVELOPER Massive Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** Sierra • **WEBSITE** www.sierra.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



Dispensing with time-consuming resource-gathering and base-building, *Ground Control* is an action-oriented affair, with units divided into easy-to-manage platoons of infantry, air units, assault vehicles, and escort vehicles such as artillery and anti-aircraft guns. Forces are dropped at an insertion point of your choosing, and then it's up to you to guide them towards the mission goal. Without being killed.

LEGO ROCK RAIDERS

DEVELOPER Data Design • **PUBLISHER** Lego Media • **WEBSITE** www.legomedia.com • **OUT** Jan 2000



Resource management strategy in the Lego universe. A spaceship full of Lego men gets sucked into a black hole and spat out into an alternate galaxy. They must land on a planet and drill for ore and crystals to gain enough energy to return home. Hazards arrive in the form of rock monsters, ice monsters and slugs. Expect there to be plenty of copies available.

WARZONE 2120

DEVELOPER Pumpkin Studios • **PUBLISHER** Eidos Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.pumpkin.co.uk • **OUT** 2001

Warzone 2100 was fairly well received, at least in these quarters, though some found the full 3D graphics irksome. The sequel is hardly going to take a backward step and will again feature full spinny-rotatey 3D, albeit set 20 years after the original, as the more mathematically-minded will have gleaned.

LEMMINGS REVOLUTION

DEVELOPER TBA • **PUBLISHER** Psygnosis • **WEBSITE** www.psygnosis.com • **OUT** TBA



The Lemmings might be back in a new adventure, but the whole thing is currently shrouded in mystery and it's possible that *Lemmings Revolution* might never see the light of day.

However, a demo of the game was developed that was available on a *Lemmings Revolution* website for two weeks. The idea was that punters would try it out and a decision would be made, based on their feedback, as to whether to continue with the full game. You can probably still find it if you surf the Net.

METAL FATIGUE

DEVELOPER Zono Inc • **PUBLISHER** Sierra • **WEBSITE** www.metalfatigue.net/ • **OUT** TBC



With a classic anime plot brimming with betrayal and honour, *Metal Fatigue* involves three brothers squabbling over the riches of a long-dead alien civilisation. Set in a fully 3D world with multiple camera angles, expect giant, re-configurable Combots, artificial intelligence from award-winning game designer Mark Baldwin, and a pre-build phase that gives you enough time to establish your base before being attacked.

CIVILIZATION III

DEVELOPER Firaxis • **PUBLISHER** Hasbro Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.hluk.co.uk • **OUT** TBA

Civilization is back, and so is its creator, Sid Meier. His development outfit, Firaxis, is developing *Civilization III* for Hasbro in a one-game agreement, having previously knocked out *Alpha Centauri* for EA.

The team is largely the same as the one that worked on the previous incarnations, so it's fair to say that we can expect more of the same.

STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS

DEVELOPER 14 East • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.interplay.com • **OUT** TBA



Based in the classic *Star Trek* universe, *New Worlds* eschews the infinite vastness of space, taking place entirely on the surface of various planets, all in full 3D. Featuring three separate races – Federation, Klingon and Romulan – battles will take place across six different worlds, including volcanic planets, ice worlds and sweeping deserts.

STAR TREK: ARMADA

DEVELOPER Activision • **PUBLISHER** Activision • **WEBSITE** www.activision.com/games/armada/ • **OUT** Spring 2000



The Borg are, apparently, back, and *Star Trek: Armada* is the first real-time 3D strategy game set in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* universe. Over various campaigns, you take command of the fleets of the Federation, the Romulans, the Klingons and the Borg, using up to 30 starships in dynamic ship-to-ship combat, as well as overseeing their construction, repair and crews.

SUDDEN STRIKE

DEVELOPER TBA • **PUBLISHER** CDV • **WEBSITE** www.suddenstrike.de • **OUT** Spring 2000

Best known at home for publishing mucky adult games, German code barons CDV are hoping to blitz the world with *Sudden Strike*, a WWII real-time strategy game that combines fast-paced action and realistic attention to detail.

Choosing either German, Russian, American, British or French forces (the latter offering the shortest game, obviously), *Sudden Strike* features over 100 units with which to command and conquer over dozens of missions. Some new features worth getting excited about are resupply trucks, paratroopers, infantry that can enter buildings and the ability to have up to 1,000 units moving on each map.

We've had an early demo bouncing around the office for a couple of months and it would be fair to say that *Sudden Strike* has the potential to be one of the summer's surprise hits.

Better than *Tiberian Sun*? Richie Shoemaker seems to think so.



German paratroopers dropped behind enemy lines



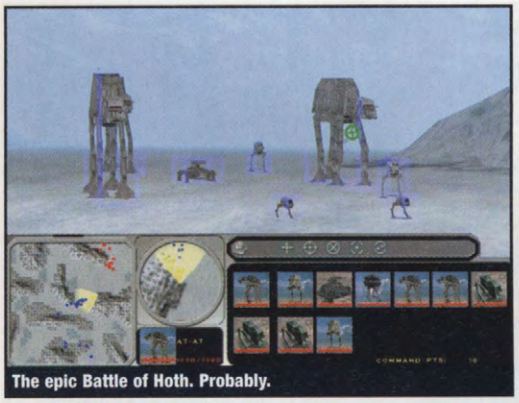
What a bleedin' mess!



The Russian winter sets in.

STAR WARS: FORCE COMMANDER

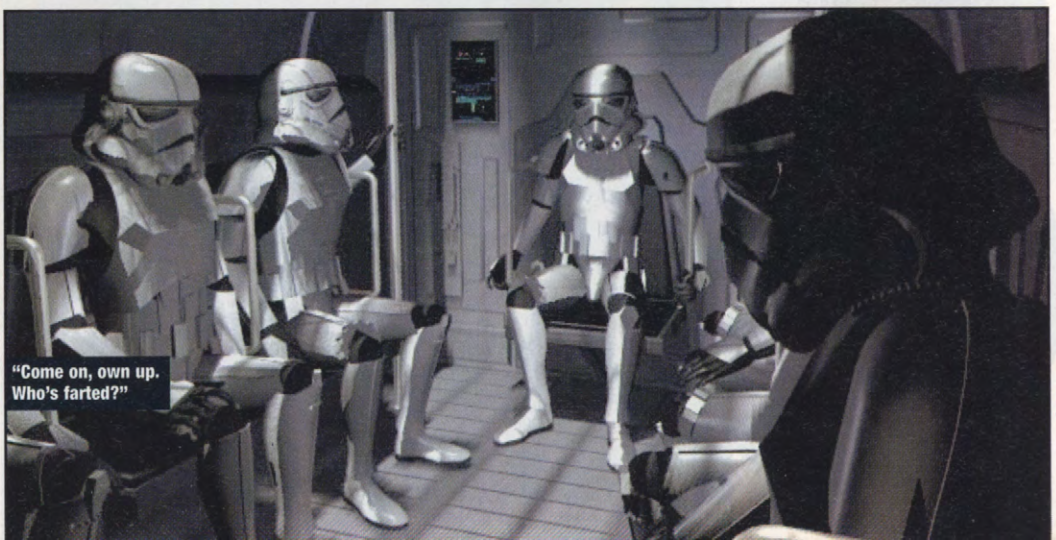
DEVELOPER LucasArts • **PUBLISHER** Activision • **WEBSITE** www.lucasarts.com • **OUT** TBC



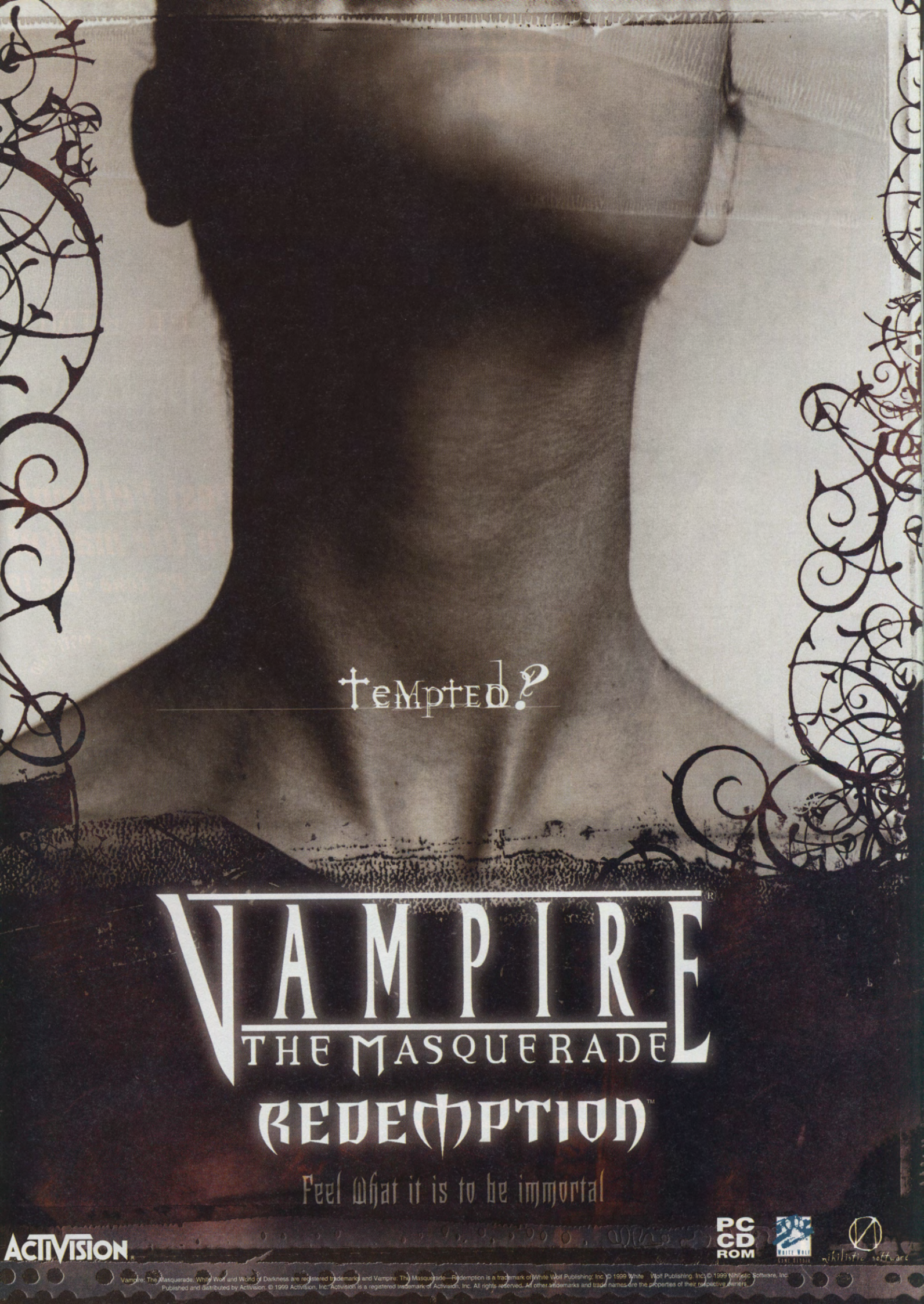
The epic Battle of Hoth. Probably.

It was supposed to be out ages ago, and since its announcement we've had the small matter of *The Phantom Menace*. The film, the game and the merchandising were respectively overlong, over-hyped and overbearing, and the danger for LucasArts is that people are sick to the back teeth of *Star Wars*, or at least of its shoddy spin-offs.

However, *Force Commander* is 'proper' *Star Wars*, as opposed to the glorified Muppet Show of *The Phantom Menace*, and it should be all the better for it. Its missions span the *Star Wars* trilogy, and playing as either the Rebel Alliance or the Galactic Empire, the game will offer you full-scale, ground-based combat over a vast array of fully 3D 'engagement theatres'. Let's hope you can kill Ewoks.



"Come on, own up. Who's farted?"



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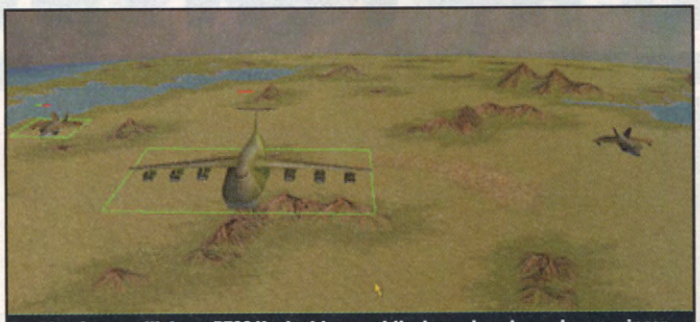
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SOVEREIGN

DEVELOPER Verdant • PUBLISHER Sony • WEBSITE www.verdant.com/products_sovereign.html • OUT Late 2000

From the creators of on-line RPG *Everquest*, the forthcoming *Sovereign* will be a massive multiplayer strategy game. Not one for the casual gamer, it is predicted that games will average four to five weeks of gameplay. Before you even start a game, you create up to six personas per account and, unlike *Everquest*, you can move these personas between servers.

The personas are the classes in the game, with each class bequeathing additional skills upon you for a multiplayer game. The six personas are soldier, diplomat, spy, economist, scientist and theologian, each with respective special abilities. The soldier can command better units; the spy has access to spy satellites and other espionage techniques; the economist earns more money; and the theologian can convert more civilians to warriors by demagoguery. Games begin on a randomly generated planet, complete with arctic poles, swamps, hills, mountains, deserts, tundra, plains and forests.



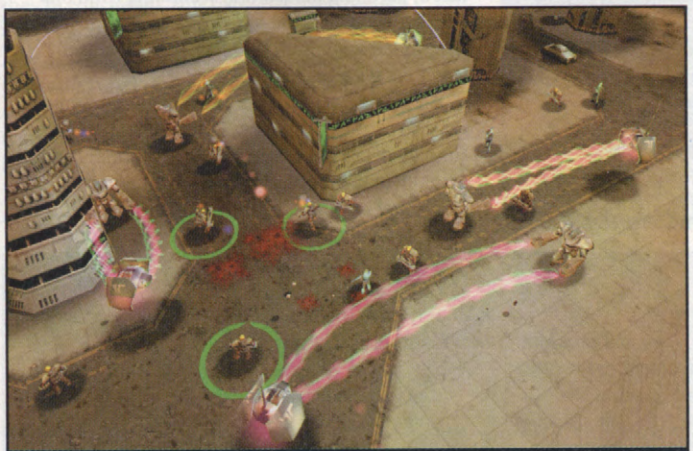
Looking for a multiplayer RTS? Verdant have got the know-how to produce a winner.



Ambitious in scale, we're looking forward to *Sovereign*.

DARK REIGN 2

DEVELOPER Pandemic Studios • PUBLISHER Activision • WEBSITE www.pandemicstudios.com • OUT TBC



***Dark Reign 2*. Handsome.**

Run away...



While completing the highly-rated *Battlezone II*, developers Pandemic have been simultaneously working on another sequel, the follow-up to the war-based RTS of choice for many. *Dark Reign 2* is claiming to be the first true 3D RTS game, and is set against the backdrop of the war between the powerful Jovian Detention Authority and the upstart Sprawlers, thus providing a prequel to the conflict between the Imperium and Freedom Guard featured in the original.

Boasting an all-new game engine, *Dark Reign 2* will introduce new strategic elements, such as day and night missions, with darkness opening up a whole different world of pain. With full 3D terrain, maps become living worlds and can be used to your advantage. Troops can be hidden under trees, for instance, and artillery positioned on high ground to control the passes to your base.

It certainly looks impressive, and we sincerely hope they don't cock it up.

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE – DOMINION WARS

DEVELOPER Gizmo Games • PUBLISHER Simon & Schuster Interactive • WEBSITE www.simonsays.com/interactive • OUT Autumn 2000



Yet more *Star Trek* is heading your way courtesy of Simon & Schuster, who sound like a pair of camp TV chefs. It's the *Deep Space Nine* universe this time, and *Dominion Wars* is an RTS with an emphasis on tactical space combat. Players control up to six ships from the four DS9 races, namely Federation, Klingon, Cardassian and Jem'Hadar.

WARMONKEYS

DEVELOPER Silicon Dreams • PUBLISHER TBC • RELEASE DATE TBC • WEBSITE www.sdreams.co.uk



Set in a full 3D environment, battles in *WarMonkeys* take place with up to 200 individual units split between three opposing forces, across sprawling battlefields of up to 10 square kilometres. There are more than 40 different unit types to command, including infantry, mechanised units and alien creatures, and a diverse range of camera modes, including long-range strategic and third-person views.

X-COM: GENESIS

DEVELOPER Microprose • PUBLISHER Hasbro • WEBSITE www.hasbrointeractive.com • OUT Christmas 2000



Details on the latest in the *X-COM* series have been hard to come by in recent months, but details and screenshots have at last started to surface – most importantly that *Genesis* will be both 3D and real-time. Be prepared for something altogether similar from *X-COM* creators Mythos Games, who are said to be remaking *UFO: Enemy Unknown*, the game that kicked the whole series off.

Z2

DEVELOPER The Bitmap Brothers • PUBLISHER GT Interactive • WEBSITE www.bitmap-brothers.co.uk • OUT TBC

The Bitmap Brothers reigned supreme in the mid-Eighties, with such classics as *Xenon*, *The Chaos Engine* and *Speedball I* and *II*. However, the mid-Nineties brought the massively hyped *Z* which, despite critical acclaim, failed to trouble vendors outside the UK. Undeterred, they are back with the sequel. And no, they're not real brothers.

RISK II

DEVELOPER Deep Red • PUBLISHER Hasbro • WEBSITE www.deepred.co.uk • OUT Feb/Mar 2000



Risk has come a long way in the 40 years since it was first created, having invaded the homes of millions in its board game incarnation and slipped in via the back door on PC and PlayStation. This new 3D accelerated version is hardly going to set the hearts of the strategy hardcore on fire, but for *Risk* fans looking forward to taking over the world against intelligent AI opponents or online, *Risk II* could turn out to be a bit of all right.

ACTION/ADVENTURE

ALONE IN THE

DEVELOPER Darkworks • PUBLISHER Infogrames • WEBSITE www.infogrames.co.uk • OUT October 2000

Keith Pullin finds himself alone in the dark again as the classic PC horror-adventure series makes a fearsome return

Long before *Resident Evil* arrived on our computers and consoles came the chilling action/adventure *Alone In The Dark*. It raised a few eyebrows – and heckles – to say the least. The combination of action and adventure in one, seamless, movie-like horror experience was sheer genius to some. More significantly, it introduced a whole new genre to the world of PC gaming.

Rather disappointingly, its sequel arrived to zombie-like grunts and growls of derision. There was no improvement graphically and the gameplay suffered from too many contrived puzzles and aimless scampering through hedge mazes.

Thankfully, it wasn't too long before it returned to form. The third episode delivered stunning graphics, cunning puzzles and a very, very eerie atmosphere. Overall, the trilogy, despite the shortcomings of the second game, was considered a classic. However, that was five years ago, and that was the last we heard of paranormal investigator extraordinaire Edward Carnby.

Meanwhile, a new breed of horror-adventure has appeared, most notably *Resident Evil 1* and *2*. With the same graphical style as the *AITD* games, the only reason these games are edging towards classic status is because they're taking advantage of newer technology in the absence of any decent competition. The recent release of *Nocturne* has fuelled the fire slightly, but what we're really waiting for – what we've always waited for – is *Alone In The Dark 4*.

"Dynamic lighting is used to create authentic-looking shadows, and lightning flashes across the sky to enhance the foreboding mood"

FRENCH INNOVATION

That wait is almost over. Charged with bringing the series up to 21st Century standards is the unenviable task of French developer Darkworks. They've been working on the project for over 18 months now and, while the going may be slow, the creative aspirations of these Gallic 'artistes' are beginning to make their mark. Okay, so a cursory glance over these pages will reveal the pretty, if rather standard backdrops of haunted houses, dark corridors and hideously mutated beasts... All that is basic *Alone In The Dark* stuff, and we expect nothing less. What you cannot hope to appreciate by simply looking at a few simple stills is that unlike previous *AITD* games, the backgrounds are all real-time. Dynamic lighting is used to create authentic-looking shadows, and lightning even flashes across the sky to enhance the foreboding mood. If you've played the previous three games and remember the sort of frightening claustrophobic environments that were created without 3D acceleration, imagine the tension this new technology will bring.

There have also been significant changes to Carnby himself. No longer is he a simple stony-faced, paranoid delusional, stumbling from one predetermined puzzle to the next. He's now our hero and storyteller rolled into one. Confused? Don't be. It's quite simple...

AITD4's plot unfolds depending on how you react to certain situations. This is not a case of simply kill or run, either. The programmers are actually in the process of implementing real emotional responses. Players can be brave, stupid, wary, scared and more besides. Every emotion exhibited causes a reaction somewhere in the game. This could be a simple case of braving the darkness of a room to find an exit on the other side, or something subtler, like monsters backing off after you've shown you're not scared of them.

The gameplay itself is as much about exploring Carnby's mind as it is about exploring the bizarre world you find yourself in. No surprises, then, that Darkworks list psychological entertainers like David Cronenberg and Stanley Kubrick among their influences. In true homage to films like *Existenz* and *Videodrome*, Darkworks hope to create: *(In French accent)* "a sense immersion experience".

The whole emotion concept is something that's never been done before. If it works, the results should be truly fascinating. Maybe there's scope for analogue joystick control, or force feedback. You could press right slowly to walk away from a situation in a calm manner, or whack the joystick really hard to run away panicking and screaming. Now that would be cool. On the other hand, if the interface has us clawing the keyboard, pressing 'W'

MODERN FRIGHTS

Here are a few more games that make things go bump in the night...



RESIDENT EVIL (CAPCOM) This was the game that basically took over the mantle of king of the horror genre in the absence of *AITD*. It featured a bunch of zombies running amok through a small town in America. Originally a PlayStation game, *Resident Evil* made the jump on to the PC and was met with a rousing reception.



NOCTURNE (TAKE 2) Extremely scary and excellent use of sound makes *Nocturne* the current leader in the horror field. The only real downside stems from the strange camera angles, which occasionally obscure your view, making fighting trickier than it should be. Oh, and you also need a seriously kick-ass PC to run it.



RESIDENT EVIL 2 (CAPCOM) More of the same, but on a bigger scale, and with a few more adventure elements thrown in. *RE2* isn't quite as linear as the first game either, which upset a few straight-down-the-middle action fans, but endeared it more to the 'thinkers'.



SYSTEM SHOCK 2 (ELECTRONIC ARTS) Obviously, this is a role-playing game, and not an action/adventure, but the point is that it's pretty damn scary and it features lots of zombies. OK, so they're on a a spaceship, but they're still zombies, nonetheless.



DARK 4



Edward prepares for a fall.

for 'worried', 'S' for 'scared' and 'Shift B' for 'absolutely bricking it' the novelty factor could wear off quickly.

One other notable feature is that the highly emotional Edward has arrived in this spooked-out world armed only with a torch. At first, this may not seem like the best weapon to have, but it's still got its uses. The torch is a fundamental part of exploration and combat. With the help of some more dynamic jiggery-pokery, *AITD4* will feature some of the scariest probing in the dark yet seen on a PC. And when it comes to combat, a quick flash of UV light at the mutated head of an undead assailant is more effective than any gun. Edward can also rely on his fists and feet, too; no amount of emotional turmoil can put a halt to that.

RESPECT

Publishers Infogrames will not let *AITD4* out of their sight until they're completely happy with it. They were the original developers, so as far as they're concerned, this baby has to be perfect. But it has to be said that they're just as keen as the new developers to see the series advance into uncharted territory.

Good news indeed – a sympathetic publisher with first-hand experience of the trials and tribulations of programming an *AITD* game. Let's just hope that mutual respect doesn't get in the way of the game's supposed October release. PCZ



It's a pretty bleak and desolate place that Edward finds himself in. Some things never change.



"Hands up, baby, hands up, gimme your love, gimme gimme your love, gimme gimme."

HISTORICAL HORROR

Ghosts of Christmas past...



The first *AITD* game, devised by Bruno Bonelli, was released in 1991. It changed the face of PC gaming with its movie-like camera angles and immersive plot.



The second instalment, released in 1993, was not quite as successful. Still, it was relatively scary, and die-hard (or is that die-slowly?) fans lapped up more of the same.



Then came the third game and, in our opinion, the best of the lot. Released in 1995, *AITD3* was graphically superior to anything else seen. It also combined a deep sense of foreboding with wonderful gameplay. In short, a total classic.

Thankfully, you can still buy all three games in one neat little package for the very pleasant price of £19.99. Check them out – it's well worth it.

ALIEN RESURRECTION

DEVELOPER Fox Interactive • **PUBLISHER** Fox Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.foxinteractive.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

It's been a long time coming, but *Alien Resurrection* should be more than worth the wait. Set on the research ship Auriga, the game features a similar kind of shadowy graphics engine as seen in *Thief: The Dark Project*, only more realistic. With team-based multiplayer options along the lines of *Half-Life*, expect something very special and very scary around April.

PLANET OF THE APES

DEVELOPER Visiware Studios • **PUBLISHER** Fox Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.foxinteractive.com • **OUT** March 2000



Stealth is the new vogue, and it's the angle *Planet Of The Apes* is about to pursue. Playing the part of the human Ulysses, your goal is to simply escape the planet. Mandrill assassins and renegade baboons are some of the apes barring your way. Oh, and you can expect to see old favourites like Dr Zaius too. The monkeying around starts this spring.

BLADE

DEVELOPER Rebel Act Studios • **PUBLISHER** Infogrames • **WEBSITE** www.rebelact.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



When it comes to storyline, *Blade* sounds ordinary: a bunch of adventurers go off in search of some keys to open a vault that contains the only sword capable of defeating a dragon bent on taking over the world.

However, we're more interested in the game engine. With dynamic volumetric lighting, unique real-time shadows and incredible reflecting and transparent surfaces, *Blade* should take the action/adventure genre to the limit.

HEAVY METAL FAKK2

DEVELOPER Ritual Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** Take 2 • **WEBSITE** www.ritual.com • **OUT** Early 2000



Using the *Quake III* engine, Ritual Entertainment's latest 3D action affair will supposedly feature 3D terrains that span as far as the eye can see. The game also claims to have full day to night transitions, and weather effects such as rain and lightning in a completely real-time world. Sounds interesting. Let's hope it has the gameplay to match.

HITMAN

DEVELOPER IO Interactive • **PUBLISHER** Eidos Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.iointeractive.com • **OUT** TBC



Featuring accurate topography based upon real-life locations and architecture, immersive 3D sound and advanced artificial intelligence on NPCs, *Hitman* promises a lot. We're intrigued by the fact that you also play the part of an actual hitman, who basically has to go around knocking people off. Of course it's sick and twisted, but hey – it's just a game.

DEUS EX

DEVELOPER Ion Storm • **PUBLISHER** Eidos • **WEBSITE** www.ionstorm.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

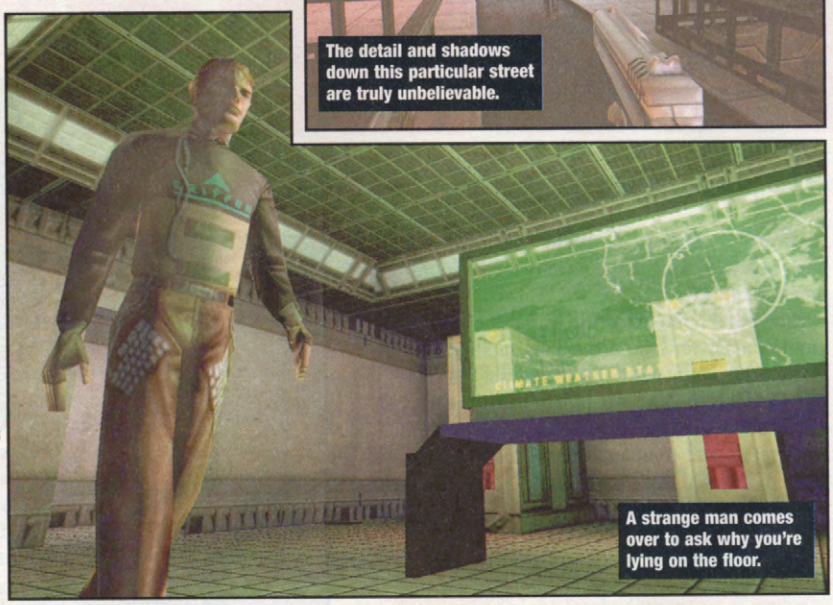
With the tweaking of *Daikatana* at a critical stage, it's a wonder that Ion Storm have time to do anything else. Still, somehow they've found that time and *Deus Ex* is the result.

Set 50 years in the future and ten minutes before the apocalypse, this incredible-looking, first-person RPG is shaping up into one of the most exciting prospects of the year. You assume the role of a secret agent who becomes embroiled in an *X-Files* type conspiracy. The plot includes such delights as secret government organisations, deadly plagues and the quest for an antidote known only as 'Ambrosia'.

A major slice of the gameplay centres on 'nanotech' enhancements and a plethora of hi-tech tools allowing you to warp around the planet at your will. *Deus Ex* sounds like the closest thing yet to *System Shock 2*. Here's hoping.



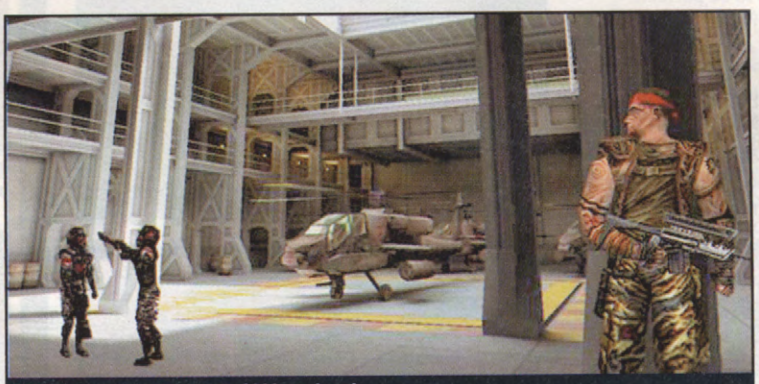
The detail and shadows down this particular street are truly unbelievable.



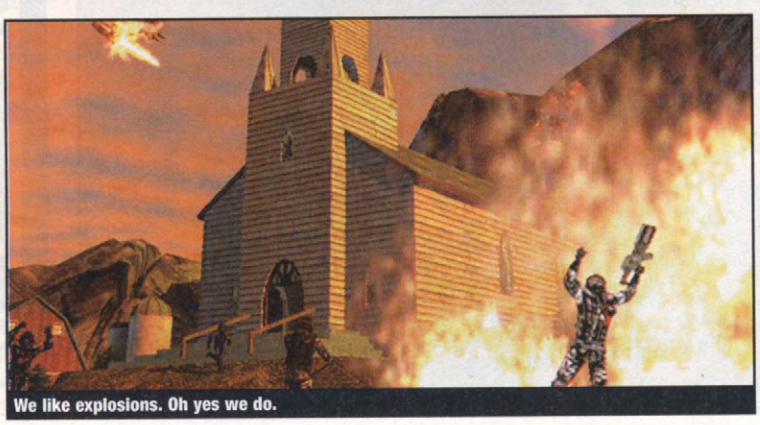
A strange man comes over to ask why you're lying on the floor.

C&C: RENEGADE

DEVELOPER Westwood • **PUBLISHER** Westwood • **WEBSITE** www.westwood.com • **OUT** July 2000



GDI forces engage in a spot of hide and seek.



We like explosions. Oh yes we do.

The *Command & Conquer* series of games has reached legendary status among strategy fans. No surprise, then, to find Westwood switching perspectives to an up-close-and-personal third-person view to attract new fans.

You are a lone GDI commando and your task is to infiltrate a NOD stronghold and bring the whole thing crashing down. Dodging the searing heat of a Flame Tank or avoiding the crushing tread of a Tick Tank is something we've learned to accept when watching the action from afar. However, when you're right in there, running for cover, avoiding detection and flying, driving and getting seriously stuck in, it's a different story altogether.

C&C Renegade should ultimately be a kind of sci-fi version of *Hidden & Dangerous*. Watch out for it, whether you're a fan of the series or otherwise.

ANACHRONOX

DEVELOPER Ion Storm • **PUBLISHER** Eidos • **WEBSITE** www.ionstorm.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

Anachronox has just one aim in mind, and that is to make Squaresoft's *Final Fantasy VIII* look like a child's nursery rhyme in comparison. From what we've seen, developer Ion Storm are going the right way about it, too.

Instead of having one long, sprawling, messy story, the action has been split into 100 levels encompassing over 150 monsters. This allows room for subtler changes in the plot, more depth to the characters and, most importantly, gameplay you can actually play – unlike *Final Fantasy VII*, with its notorious lack of interaction.

It's ironic, really, because Ion Storm have touted *Anachronox* as being the tender action movie of the gaming world. At first, everything is very light-hearted and jovial, but slowly things change. The story takes on a darker feel, and people who you've come to care about begin to die. Apparently, the finished version will actually make you cry.

Sounds like one for the girls, then...



One of the hundred or so levels featured in the game.



Looks like one of the main characters is about to break down and weep like a girl.

HALO

DEVELOPER Bungie • **PUBLISHER** TBC • **WEBSITE** www.bungie.com • **OUT** Mid 2000



An actual in-game screenshot. Does this look stunning or what?

Our hero launches a missile at an incoming alien fighter.

If you're after an epic third-person action/adventure, look no further than *Halo*. Set on a strange ring-world, you play the part of a human recon soldier who wages a one-man war against an alien race. It may sound like your usual run-of-the-mill plot but, believe us, *Halo* promises to be something very special indeed. The main reason for our enthusiasm is the inclusion of a graphics and physics engine of the kind we have literally never seen before. Every vehicle in the game (of which there are loads – including flying and driving) moves in such a realistic way, you can't even tell that they're computer-generated models. We watched a running demo and it was like watching a film.

There's still plenty of work to do, but rest assured – *Halo* is one game we will be keeping a very close eye on.

EVOLVA

DEVELOPER Computer Artworks • **PUBLISHER** Virgin • **WEBSITE** www.vie.co.uk • **OUT** Winter 1999



Evolva is a surreal mix of real-time strategy, 3D action/adventure and puzzle game. The actual plot is a lot simpler: you charge through the galaxy as an advanced warrior known as the Genohunter, killing all the aliens you see. The twist lies in the truly incredible engine, which allows you to morph into aliens you've just terminated in order to kill more. Odd? That's why we like it, of course.

THE REAL NEVERENDING STORY

DEVELOPER Discreet Monsters • **PUBLISHER** TBC • **WEBSITE** www.discreetmonsters.com • **OUT** Summer 2000



The Real Neverending Story claims to be the world's first authentic 3D real-time adventure game. For once, this is a boast that appears to be based on fact. Discreet Monsters' revolutionary graphics engine, called 'MonsterEngine', creates a constantly evolving online world. There's an offline game too, of course, but our brains hurt just thinking about it.

HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

DEVELOPER Digital Village • **PUBLISHER** Pan Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.digitalvallge.com • **OUT** Spring 2001

Described by Digital Village as a 3D towel 'em up, *Hitchhiker's* should install a well-needed dollop of humour into the action/adventure genre. The game follows the plot and spirit of the books to the letter, which should mean that at some point Arthur Dent pops a fish in his ear. Unfortunately, we've got more than a year to wait until we see that happen.

THE LONGEST JOURNEY

DEVELOPER Funcom • **PUBLISHER** Funsoft • **WEBSITE** www.longestjourney.com • **OUT** Summer 2000



The Longest Journey may not be completely original (it's a simple point-and-click adventure, after all), but it is attempting to do what developers seem keen to overlook. That is, it treats the player like an adult. By this we mean that the spoken dialogue (of which there is loads) is aimed at the intelligent older audience and may include references to (whisper) sex. Better watch out for that one, then.

THE DEVIL INSIDE

DEVELOPER Gamesquad • **PUBLISHER** Cryo • **WEBSITE** www.gamesquad.fr • **OUT** TBC



We've just had our first sneak peak at *The Devil Inside* and we're getting quite excited about the new Hubert "*Alone in the Dark*" Chardot development. You can expect a completely original style of play that has you and your roving cameraman sent in to investigate ghastly goings on. Your footage is beamed back to a live studio audience and if they don't like what they see, the sponsors could pull the shot, the live footage and your game. Now that's originality.

STAR TREK DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN

DEVELOPER The Collective • **PUBLISHER** Simon & Schuster • **WEBSITE** www.collectivestudios.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



Here at *ZONE*, Trekkies are already gibbering with excitement at the prospect of *The Fallen*. Controlling either Worf, Kira or Sisko, the emphasis is on action, and with a customised *Unreal* engine holding the whole lot together, *The Fallen* looks truly remarkable. A whole host of away missions should keep interest high, and the inclusion of show favourites like the Jem'Hadar soldiers and Cardassians should give it the edge over other *ST* attempts.

OUTCAST 2

DEVELOPER Infogrames • **PUBLISHER** Infogrames • **WEBSITE** www.infogrames.co.uk • **OUT** Autumn 2000

We didn't think too much of the original game, but it had promise. It seems that potential has been realised in *Outcast 2*. At the moment, it's not known if the voxel technology will survive. One aspect that has changed, though, is the interface, so the rambling dialogue and weapon-aiming problems should be a thing of the past. Stay tuned for more news as soon as we have it.

STUPID INVADERS

DEVELOPER Ubisoft • **PUBLISHER** Ubisoft • **WEBSITE** www.stupidinvaders.com • **OUT** Summer 2000



You can always rely on the French to come up with something totally bizarre. *Stupid Invaders* is a traditional style graphic adventure where you play Slobadan Sakarin, an insane doctor who has just celebrated his 2,000th alien dissection. *Stupid Invaders* is probably the only way we'll ever get to perform a Roswell-style autopsy, so look out for it this summer.

EVIL DEAD: ASHES 2 ASHES

DEVELOPER Heavy Iron Studios • **PUBLISHER** THQ • **WEBSITE** www.thq.com • **OUT** TBC



Fans of the *Evil Dead* films will be delighted to hear that a film-based game is in development. The *Resident Evil*-type affair will be a bloody mixture of action, exploration, puzzles and sick humour. The game also boasts a novel camera system that zooms in, swivels and shakes, as well as a host of other sweat-inducing horror film tricks. Sounds like Capcom and Infogrames have some serious competition.

DRAGON'S LAIR 3D

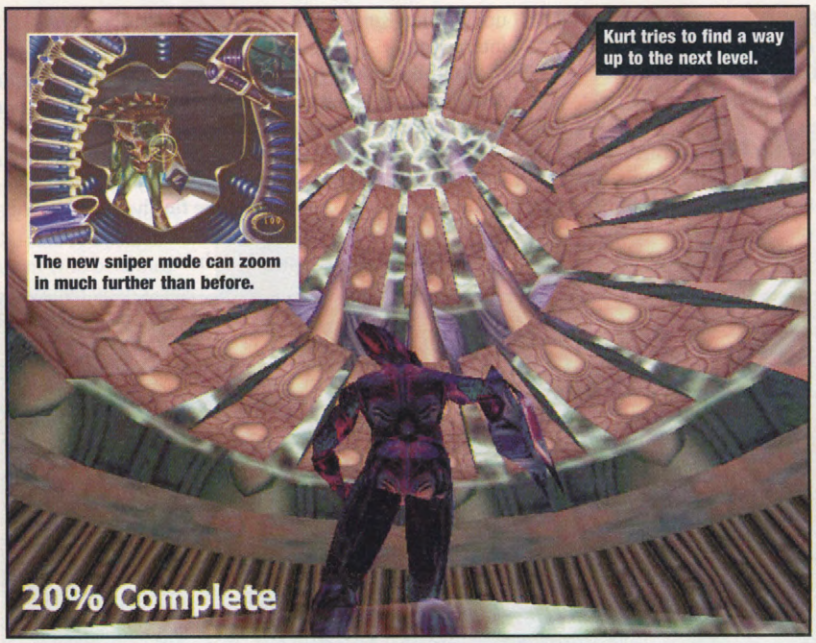
DEVELOPER Don Bluth • PUBLISHER Blue Byte • WEBSITE www.bluebyte.com • OUT Early 2001



Originally released in 1983, *Dragon's Lair* was the most visually stunning game of its time. Developer Don Bluth, who has since directed some cracking animated feature films, is back in line for the sequel. Offering "true" interactivity this time around, Dirk The Daring will be returning once more, alongside Princess Daphne, to vanquish dragons and solve puzzles in a Disney-like fashion. Expect it to come on more than one DVD.

MDK2

DEVELOPER Bioware • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.interplay.com/mdk2/ • **OUT** Spring 2000



The original *MDK* made stacks of friends with its relentless third-person action, trademark Shiny Entertainment cartoon humour and James Bond-style gadgets. Innovation was the name of the game – something new developer Bioware (*Baldur's Gate*) hope to expand upon.

Forthcoming features to look forward to include bouncing sniper shots (so you can kill enemies around corners), a much bigger play environment based on indoor and outdoor locations, and enhancements to the fantastic Chameleon stealth suit. You also get to play as all three characters, and there are loads more gadgets.

Levels involving Max the Uzi-toting dog tend to degenerate into horrific gunfights, the Kurt levels are more stealth-orientated, and those with the good doctor require more thought. Having said that, in the latest demo we've seen, he manages to turn himself into something resembling the Hulk – and then things get particularly vicious. Something for everyone, as they say. In short, *MDK2* has got us drooling like a rabid dog. The sooner this one gets finished, the better.

GALLEON

DEVELOPER Confounding Factor • **PUBLISHER** Eidos Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.confoundingfactor.com • **OUT** Summer 2000

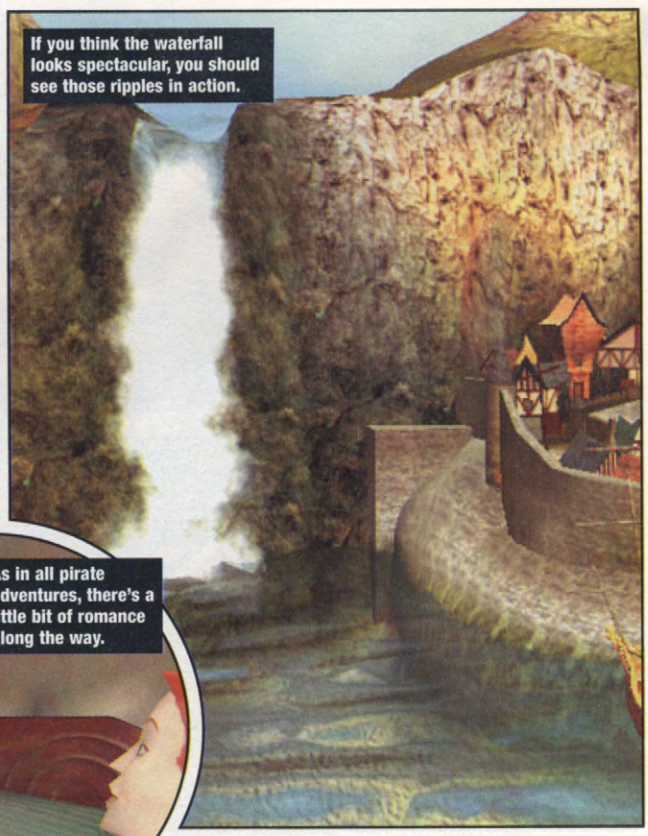
Bristol-based developers Confounding Factor have two very powerful weapons in the shape of Paul Douglas and Toby Gard. Members of the original *Tomb Raider* team left Core to pursue their own, more innovative project. *Galleon* is that project.

And what a game...

You control a number of gallant treasure hunters, including Rhama, a sabre-wielding pirate, and Faith, a rather swarthy-looking female with – surprise, surprise – large breasts.

Fabulous AI is another of *Galleon*'s strong points. When you're not controlling a character, they actually help out by completing tasks themselves. When you are in control, the process of picking up things and using them is simplified with the help of an interface that allows you to lock on to the object you want, and then scoop it up in one fluid movement.

This is one swashbuckling pirate action/adventure that promises to be very special indeed. More news soon.



MAX PAYNE

DEVELOPER 3D Realms/Remedy Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** Take 2 Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.maxpayne.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



The 'Exit Technology' in all its underground glory.



The bump and texture-mapped delights of New York's seedy alleyways.

Max Payne is an adult-orientated, third-person action game that has already blown our minds, and should do the same for you.

Programmed by Finnish ex-demo coders Remedy Entertainment, this New York killing spree of a game employs something known as 'Exit Technology'. In simple terms, this advanced rendering process eliminates fuzziness and glitches to make the graphics as smooth as possible. A quick glance at the screenshots will instantly confirm that claim.

The game is also unique in so far as the action can be viewed from two angles. There's the follow-up mode that basically stays behind Max, and the cinematic camera that provides pre-set views to dramatic scenes.

On top of all this, *Max Payne* will be released with a 3D level editor. We're told the editor will be so easy to use that new scenarios can be created in a matter of seconds.

Max Payne should be bringing maximum enjoyment and maximum refreshment some time soon.

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

DEVELOPER Planet Moon Studios • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.interplay.com/giants/ • **OUT** Spring 2000



What's he doing with his head on his stomach? And why is that plant where his head should be?

Hello, cute little Smurf creatures. Can I eat you, please?

From the team who brought you *MDK* comes the disturbing tale of *Giants*. It's hard to say exactly what category *Giants* falls into, but for now action/strategy is probably the best description. The aim is simple: to progress through 40 different worlds, slaying all who cross your path. You play the game as either Kabuto himself (a brutal monster who swallows natives whole), a group of evil sea wenches known as The Sea Reapers, or a group of five cockney space aliens known as the Meccaryns. All these races clash in world-shattering duels that draw on a whole range of influences, including *Hidden & Dangerous* and *Populous*. There are even strange Smurf-like creatures that pop up with presents if you're nice to them.

Rest assured, the humour is surreal and the gameplay bizarre. Prepare to roll your eyes skyward this spring.

ONI

DEVELOPER Bungie Software • **PUBLISHER** Bungie Software • **WEBSITE** oni.bungie.com • **OUT** Early 2000



Imagine a Japanese anime version of *Virtua Fighter*, where you can walk in and out of buildings and use guns. *Oni* is exactly that, complete with motion blur and other fight special effects. It also incorporates a neural AI system, enabling characters (both friends and enemies) to actually think in real-time. *Oni* is looking very slick indeed, and it's coming to a PC near you very soon.

NOMAD SOUL 2

DEVELOPER Quantic Dream • **PUBLISHER** TBC • **WEBSITE** www.quanticdream.com • **OUT** TBA

Details are hard to come by, but the sequel to *The Nomad Soul* is already well underway. From what we gather, Quantic Dream had so many ideas and so much unused footage of David Bowie that, rather than waste it, they're putting it all into the sequel. The engine is also to be improved, which is surprising, because essentially there's nothing wrong with it. More soon.

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT

DEVELOPER TBC • **PUBLISHER** The Gathering of Developers • **WEBSITE** www.godgames.com • **OUT** Summer 2000



It's going to take a programming miracle to recreate the psychological terror of *The Blair Witch Project* on the PC, so using the *Nocturne* game engine is a good start. No doubt subtle stealth along the lines of *Thief: The Dark Project* will also help too. At the moment not much else is known except that more than one game is planned.

SIMON THE SORCERER 3D

DEVELOPER Headfirst Games • **PUBLISHER** Adventuresoft **WEBSITE** • www.adventuresoft.com/headfirst/simon3d/index.html • **OUT** Mid 2000



Yes, another well-known gaming character is currently undergoing a 3D overhaul. Graphically, the game looks magical, with real-time lighting and shadows, as well as volumetric fogging on spell effects like fireballs and lightning bolts. The only worry lies in the fact that it's the same game engine as *Prince Of Persia 3D*. Whoops...

CANNON FODDER 3D

DEVELOPER Sensible Software • **PUBLISHER** Codemasters • **WEBSITE** www.codemasters.co.uk **OUT** TBC

Development of *Cannon Fodder 3D* is still in the preliminary stages as we speak and, to be honest, we're surprised it's taken so long for Sensible Software to implement this idea. Still, they've done it, and consequently we can expect to see a *Hidden & Dangerous* with 'laughs' some time this year.

MONKEY ISLAND 4

DEVELOPER LucasArts • **PUBLISHER** Activision **WEBSITE** www.lucasarts.com • **OUT** Some time in 2001

Remember LucasArts' revolutionary interface, which made its debut in *Grim Fandango*? Well, a new, improved version is set to be the baby that powers *Monkey Island 4*. Details are still sparse but Tim Schafer has reportedly said they're currently finalising the script. As soon as we hear any more, you'll be the first to know.

DRIVING

GRAND PRIX 3

DEVELOPER Geoff Crammond • **PUBLISHER** Hasbro/MicroProse • **WEBSITE** www.f1grandprix.co.uk • **OUT** Summer 2000

The third coming is nigh, and other developers might as well give up now. There's only one Grand Prix, and fortunately, only one *Steve Hill*

Every so often, a game comes along that is so far ahead of the competition that it effectively defines a genre. Think first person shooters and you think *Half-Life*. Mention football management and you're talking *Championship Manager*. As for Formula One games, despite numerous imitators, for the purist there can be only one. On the PC, the *Grand Prix* series *is* Formula One, a fact that is down to the inspiration and dedication of one man.

To the uninitiated, Geoff Crammond may be no more than another burger-munching, baggy-arsed computer programmer (albeit a very rich one), but to those in the know he is nothing less than an industry guru, revered by many as a gaming God.

It is Crammond's obsessive attention to detail that has made his games benchmark titles, and he leaves no stone unturned in the quest for realism. He'll happily film and photograph every inch of a track to ensure authenticity, replicating everything from the camber of a bend to the shadows in a tunnel. He's the man who put the 'a' in anal.

This emphatic attention to detail isn't without its drawbacks, though, and for a game that is scheduled for a summer 2000 release, *Grand Prix 3* will recreate the 1998 season, replete with all the relevant teams, drivers and circuits. It's the nature of the beast that Formula One games are usually a season behind, due to drivers changing teams like some people change their toothbrush, not to mention new tracks constantly being added. It would be churlish to suggest that they could simply drop in the new data a week before the game goes on sale, much like football management games do with last minute transfers and, in fairness, recreating a Grand Prix circuit is probably slightly more involved.

> **"To those in the know, he [Geoff Crammond] is nothing less than an industry guru, revered by many as a gaming god"**



It's not HSBC, it's Midland. Always has been, always will be.

Still, to continue the football metaphor further, it's the equivalent of someone releasing a World Cup game during the forthcoming Euro 2000. The 1998 season it is, though, and if nothing else, it'll give Damon Hill something to complain about on a Sunday afternoon.

YOU REALLY GOT ME GOING

The face of PC gaming has changed irrevocably since the last *Grand Prix* title, and the third instalment will be launched into a world rife with powerful 3D accelerator cards. Every screenshot shown here is from the software version, and the minimum spec they are aiming for is a PII 266. As for the accelerated version, shots are being kept firmly under wraps, as indeed are images in general, with these same eight grabs doing the rounds ad infinitum.

But it's what it looks like when it's moving that really counts, and we've seen it with our own eyes during the despairathon that is ECTS. Voted Game Of The Show, the two mock-up cars were rarely empty throughout the three days, with grown men emerging from the cockpits almost in tears, a few laps of Monaco enough to bring the memories flooding back, and this the best part of a year before the game's eventual release.

When it finally turns up in a box, *GP3* will come replete with an exhaustive set of features that will keep F1 fans glued to their PCs for months. Although clearly aimed at the enthusiast, the man in a hurry will be amply catered for by the quick race option, with an overhauled menu system making it even easier to get started.

It might look easy on the telly, but the massive power to weight ratio of a Formula One car makes it near impossible to drive, let alone race. Thankfully, *Grand Prix 3* will accommodate cack-handed buffoons, and as well as five levels of difficulty, there will be no less than eight optional driving aids to ease the player into the experience, namely: auto brakes, auto gears, self-correcting spin, indestructible, ideal line, suggested gear, throttle help and steering help. If you ask nicely, it might even wipe your arse for you.

HISTORY TODAY

Step back in time

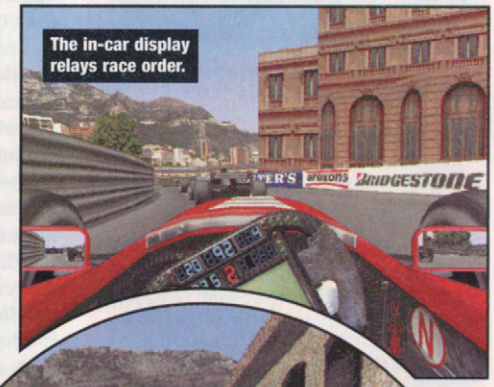
The release of *Grand Prix 3* will finally see the continuation of the series' four-yearly development cycle, begun way back in 1992 with the original *F1 Grand Prix*. Next up was *Grand Prix 2* in 1996, the game going on to sell over a million copies worldwide. If you can't wait for *GP3*, and want to see what all the fuss is about, *GP2* is currently available as part of Hasbro Interactive's Classic Range – all available at a snip-like £9.99.


Nit-pickingly perfect is what Crammond's *GP3* is.

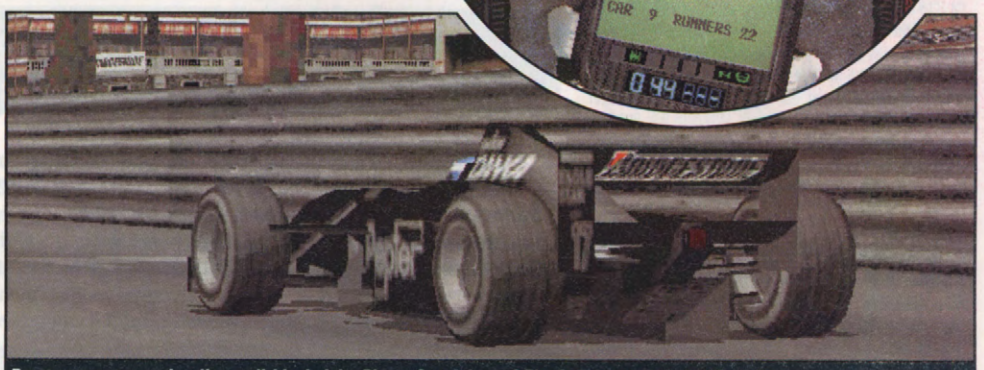




Monaco, the millionaires' playground.


The in-car display relays race order.


Looks like Monaco again, then. We are assured other tracks do exist.


Does anyone remember those all-black John Player Special cars? The fags were rank, incidentally.

HOW DEEP IS YOUR GLOVE?

The depth of the game is also fully adjustable, and when setting up the car for each track, you can utilise authentically represented car-to-pit telemetry information. This includes data on; speed, steering demand, RPM, throttle, brake, gear use, ride height, suspension travel and wheel spin for each wheel, plus longitudinal and lateral acceleration. The standard car set-up options include front and rear wings, brake balance and gear ratios, with advanced procedures going as far as adjustments to springs, ride height, dampers and anti-roll bars. For those who struggle to change a light bulb, there is a full reference guide available. It'll even tell you how to change a tyre, and the choice of 'shoes' is crucial because, for the first time, weather plays a part – whether it's pissing down with rain in Belgium, or pissing down with rain at Silverstone (as usual).

To many, Formula One is a baffling sport watched by bearded men in silk Benetton jackets and Reactolite Rapide glasses. It might be little more than a procession of 200 mile-an-hour cigarette packets bogged down by incomprehensible technical regulations, but to millions of fans, Formula One *is* a passion. Geoff Crammond's passion is no less than an obsession, and working virtually alone, *Grand Prix 3* is clearly a labour of love. It's not as if he needs the money, after all.

The data might be two years out of date, but that's the price you pay for genius. With Crammond in charge, there's absolutely no doubt that *Grand Prix 3* will be a stunning game, setting the F1 benchmark for years to come. You could almost say we're looking forward to it. PCZ

THE GREAT PRETENDERS

Many have tried, but few have come close. Here are the also-rans



MONACO GRAND PRIX RACING SIMULATION 2 (Ubi Soft)

An excellent game, let down by a ludicrous name and the lack of an official licence, something that is set to be rectified with *F1 Racing Simulation*, which uses the same engine.



GRAND PRIX LEGENDS (Sierra)

Set in the time when men were men, fuel management systems were called carburettors and cars were cigar-shaped rockets, this was a superbly realised idea, if prohibitively difficult.



F1 '97 (Psygnosis)

The Murray Walker commentary grated after a while, but it was playable enough, its console inclination confirmed by the *F1 '99* release being PlayStation only.



OFFICIAL FORMULA ONE RACING (Eidos)

Neither here nor there, really – it had all the right ingredients which somehow failed to gel into a recipe for success, and it largely disappeared without trace.

NEED FOR SPEED: MOTOR CITY

DEVELOPER EA Canada • **PUBLISHER** Electronic Arts • **WEBSITE** www.ea.com • **OUT** Summer 2000



The *Need For Speed* franchise has taken many guises over the years, but this latest one is a backward step, chronologically at least. Forget your Ferrari Testosterones and Lamborghini Diablos, *Motor City* features over 40 licensed classics, including a 1957 Chevrolet Sport, a 1963 Corvette Stingray and a 1966 Pontiac GTO, all of them extremely customisable.

Some interesting on-line options are also planned, with the intended creation of a *Motor City* community. Virtual Grease, anyone?

OFF THE ROAD

DEVELOPER Invictus • **PUBLISHER** Codemasters • **WEBSITE** www.codemasters.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



Off-road racing would appear to be all the rage, with only the definite article separating this Codemasters' effort from its Rage counterpart. Whether the name will remain the same is yet to be confirmed, but this is 4x4 arcade racing featuring trucks, buggies and even military vehicles, all with realistic, individual handling.

Developed by Hungarian outfit Invictus, *Off The Road* takes in 18 vast locations, from the snow and ice of Yosemite to the arid dunes of the African desert.

THE ITALIAN JOB

DEVELOPER SCi • **PUBLISHER** SCi • **WEBSITE** www.sci.co.uk • **OUT** Summer 2000

"You're only supposed to blow the bloody doors off!" Starring Michael Caine, Noël Coward and Benny Hill, *The Italian Job* was originally released in 1969, and seemed to be on television at least three times a year for the entirety of the Seventies, earning the humble Mini Cooper a legion of fans.

The ultimate caper movie, it's ideal fodder for a game conversion and we await the results with interest. Still not sure about that ending, though.

OFF ROAD

DEVELOPER Rage Birmingham • **PUBLISHER** Rage • **WEBSITE** www.rage.co.uk • **OUT** Spring 2000

No prizes for guessing what kind of racing is on offer here, with *Off Road* letting you compete on some of the most treacherous, exciting and compelling off-road tracks from around the world.

Races can either be against the clock or an opponent, comprising both an arcade mode and a full World Championship. A wide selection of vehicles is available, each with three levels of upgrade, making for some particularly realistic vehicle handling. Interesting.

MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

DEVELOPER Rainbow Studios • **PUBLISHER** Microsoft •**WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com • **OUT** Feb '00



Bike games don't get much better than the original *Motocross Madness* – a problem when fashioning a sequel. However, a host of new features are promised, including weather effects, with water and ice affecting the bike's overall performance.

The scenery is also being vastly improved, and the outdoor tracks will be littered with trees, bushes, cones, hay bales and spectators. Chuck in some theme-based environments, such as trailer parks and deserted airports, and *Motocross Madness 2* looks like another winner.

RALLY MASTERS

Developer Digital Illusions • **Publisher** Infogrames • **Website** www.infogrames.co.uk • **OUT** Spring 2000

From the developers of *Motorhead*, this is the officially licensed game of the Michelin Rally Masters Championship – the annual Gran Canaria event whereby two cars compete side by side on a parallel figure of eight circuit, Scalextric style. As much about drivers as it is the actual cars, the championship enables you to take on the likes of Alistair and Colin McRae, not to mention Hannu Mikkola, Stig Blomqvist and some two dozen other unpronounceables, the contest taking place on a knockout basis.

There are three other game modes to enjoy, all based on fictional tracks, and there is certainly plenty of variety on offer, the 48 courses ranging from American stadiums to agricultural backwaters.

2D trees notwithstanding, *Rally Masters* is graphically impressive and looks like being an excellent addition to the genre, falling somewhere between the anal authenticity of *Rally Championship*, and the simplistic, elongated powerslide of *Sega Rally 2*. Nice.



"Anywhere here's fine, mate."



"Eat my dust!"

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2

DEVELOPER Codemasters • **PUBLISHER** Codemasters • **WEBSITE** www.codemasters.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

Having swapped his Subaru for a Ford Focus, the year 2000 will herald the return of the Mc, the dour Scotsman again lending his name to this highly anticipated sequel. Widely considered a benchmark for rally games on the PC, the original *Colin McRae Rally* is still a supremely playable affair, with only the occasionally lacklustre graphics giving away its age. Naturally, this will be addressed in *McRae 2*, as Codemasters are promising a refined graphics engine which allows for greater depth of detail and speed of movement, with cars looking far more realistic due to a significantly higher polygon count. They've also been given a paint job in the shape of a new reflection-mapping technique, which gives the cars a sleeker effect. The scenery will also benefit from the new engine and uses photographic references from each of the countries featured. It looks great, and frankly, it's hard to see how they can go wrong.



Come on Colin, try harder.

Look at that. Trees and everything.

FELONY PURSUIT

DEVELOPER Polygon Studio • **PUBLISHER** THQ • **WEBSITE** www.thq.com • **OUT** Summer 2000





Cops & Robbers, 21st Century style.
A bridge too far for this 'ere crook.

With the spectacular *Midtown Madness* opening the floodgates for urban racing, the inevitable imitators are beginning to trickle through, and *Felony Pursuit* could be one of the best. Gone is the geographical authenticity of Microsoft's Chicago-based classic, developers Polygon Studio instead opting for a futuristic 21st century setting. The city has been designed with input from professional architects and urban planners, and is composed of more than 1.5 million polygons, spanning a hundred miles of game space and offering an extremely complex traffic network. The cars are in keeping with the setting, and again have each been professionally designed, making some 18 different vehicles available.

Essentially a futuristic urban car-chase adventure, the game spans 38 missions, with tense cat-and-mouse chases between hardened criminals and law-upholding police at the heart of the action. *Felony Pursuit* gives the option to play as either the cops or the robbers, and there are no prizes for guessing which we'll be choosing.

MIDNIGHT GT

DEVELOPER Rage • **PUBLISHER** Rage • **WEBSITE** www.rage.co.uk • **OUT** Spring 2000

As the name suggests, you're not going to see much daylight, with races only taking place from dusk till dawn. Set in Japan, *Midnight GT* takes the form of an official street rally racing league, contested by standard road-legal cars with the odd bit of turbo-charging and tweaking. Drivers compete to be number one in the prestigious Midnight League, and races take place on tightly winding city streets, as well as demanding open rally courses.

Set over 12 different environments, the game will offer a wide array of surface properties that will affect how the cars handle. Loosely based on a variety of high-powered Japanese sport cars, real world data has been used to model the handling, and vehicles can sustain visible and mechanical damage, which will affect performance accordingly.

There's also an arcade mode thrown in for good measure, and *Midnight GT* could well be worth staying up for.



Nice wheels, buddy.



Drive properly.

WORLD SPORTS CARS

DEVELOPER West Racing • **PUBLISHER** Empire Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.empire.co.uk • **OUT** Spring 2000



Another generic title from Empire, and another chance to drive the world's fastest cars. With free roaming circuits, it's theoretically possible to take your vehicle off the track, through the parking lot and into the streets. Why you would want to is anyone's guess, but the 12 or so cars will be subject to real time kinematic accidents, complete with damage, dirt and fire. Chuck in weather effects and interactive pit stops, and it could be a passable effort.

DEMOLITION RACER

DEVELOPER The Pitbull Syndicate • **PUBLISHER** Infogrames • **WEBSITE** www.infogrames.co.uk • **OUT** March 2000

The Pitbull Syndicate boasts members of the *Destruction Derby* team, so they've got a good, erm, pedigree. The aim is obviously to smash as many other vehicles as possible, but variants include bowl matches, last man standing and suicide racing. Visible damage, mud and night driving, and the promise of huge jumps and 360-degree corkscrews, should be enough to put off anyone with a history of carsickness.

FORD RACING

DEVELOPER Elite • **PUBLISHER** Empire Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.fordracing.co.uk • **OUT** Jan 2000



It might sound like a Friday evening in Essex, but Empire's austerely named racer is actually a franchise based on the Ford Racing team. The game features 12 hand-picked cars from the Ford Motor Company's comprehensive US and exotic European road car model ranges, including the Taurus, the Mustang, F-Series, Explorer and GT90, as well as several 'concept' cars. *Ford Racing* features 10 minutely detailed racetracks, and a Career Mode competition against 80 other drivers.

F1 2000

DEVELOPER EA Sports • **PUBLISHER** EA Sports • **WEBSITE** www.ea.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

Since the Formula One licence became openly available, publishers have been snapping it up hungrily and slapping it on to their games with gusto. EA are never slow to grab a licensing opportunity, and *F1 2000* will recreate the 1999 FIA Formula One World Championship, which already puts it a year ahead of *F1 Grand Prix 3*. The authenticity of drivers, cars and tracks is guaranteed, including the debut of the British American Racing team and the brand new Malaysian Sepang circuit.

THE DUKES OF HAZZARD – RACING FOR HOME

DEVELOPER SouthPeak Interactive • **PUBLISHER** SouthPeak Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.southpeak.com • **OUT** March 2000

Yee Haw! A staple diet of any proper childhood, the Dukes are back in a 3D, mission-based driving game set in Hazzard County. Playing as either Bo or Luke Duke (voiced by original actor Tom Wopat), you take the wheel of the indestructible General Lee to save the family farm, defend the Duke name and rescue Daisy, all while eluding local law enforcement authorities and scheming villains. All together now: "Just two good ol' boys, never meaning no harm…"



BEETLE CRAZY CUP

DEVELOPER Xpiral • **PUBLISHER** Infogrames • **WEBSITE** www.infogrames.com • **OUT** February 2000



Popular among students and other undesirables, the humble Beetle's had many guises and there are some more in here. The game features 18 models, including your common or garden Beetle, Manx Buggy car, Karmann Ghia, Towd, Baja Buggy, New Beetle Cup, 356, and a Van.

With a Sixties atmosphere conveyed by colourful graphics, sound tracks and car design, it looks like being a riot of colour and fun.

TREAD MARKS

DEVELOPER Longbow Digital Arts • **PUBLISHER** Longbow DA • **WEBSITE** www.LongbowDigitalArts.com • **OUT** TBC



Tank racing has yet to fully capture the imagination of the public, but undeterred, Longbow Digital Arts are pressing ahead with *Tread Marks* – despite the temptation to call it *Skid Marks*.

Off-road tank racing it is, though, and *Tread Marks* lets you put holes and scorch marks in the terrain, dig a new canyon or level a significant chunk of the map.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 3D

DEVELOPER DMA • **PUBLISHER** Take 2 • **WEBSITE** www.take2europe.com • **OUT** May 2000

With *GTA 2* finished, the staff of DMA have been drinking themselves blind, to finally emerge, ashen-faced and shaking from their alcoholic stupor, to face the onerous task of typing in *GTA 3D*, the third progression in the series. It didn't work for *Jaws 3D*, but hopes are high that it will enable you to walk about first-person style and steal cars.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: ONLINE CRIME WORLD

DEVELOPER DMA • **PUBLISHER** Take 2 • **WEBSITE** www.take2europe.com • **OUT** TBC

The Take 2 organ grinders are certainly working the DMA monkeys for all they're worth, having snatched them from the clutches of Infogrames after Gremlin's dissolution.

Online Crime World is being developed alongside *GTA 3D*, and details are sketchy. Essentially, the idea is that worldwide servers let you drive with and against other players through local cities, probably in a 2D style.

ROLLCAGE STAGE II

DEVELOPER ATD • **PUBLISHER** GT Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.gtineractive.com • **OUT** TBC

While largely ignored on the PC, it was perfectly playable on PlayStation, with vehicles consisting of strange, flat, four-wheeled affairs that happily flipped and continued – a novel design, yet to catch on in the real world.

The sequel should boast flashier graphics and more over-the-top pyrotechnic effects, while hopefully maintaining the pick-up-and-play factor of the original.

HOVERACE

DEVELOPER GCSgameworld • **PUBLISHER** Grokksoft • **WEBSITE** www.GCSgameworld.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



Nothing to do with the place near Brighton, *HoveRace* is pronounced 'Hover Race' and, logically enough, involves racing hovercraft. A far cry from the norm, these are based on common civilian and military models, but suitably equipped with weapons and armour.

Largely designed for Internet play, the game also claims to offer economics management, with prize money being used to upgrade your hovercraft.

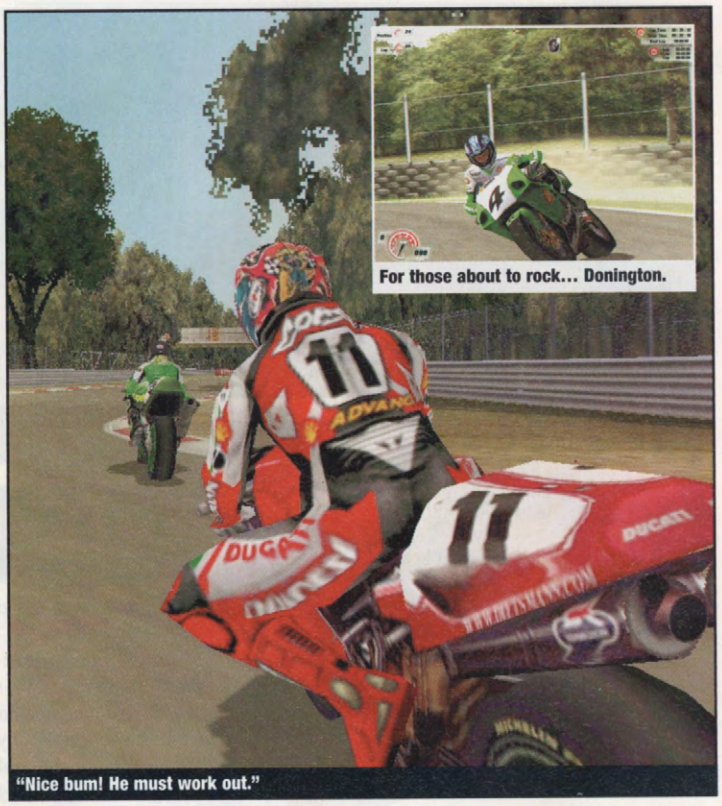
SUPERBIKE 2000

DEVELOPER EA Sports • **PUBLISHER** EA Sports • **WEBSITE** www.ea.com • **OUT** Jan 2000

As bike games go, *Superbike World Championship* was one of the best – ably recreating the experience of tearing around a track at breakneck speed with your knee grazing the tarmac. No strangers to sequels (or games ending in 2000), the inevitable *Superbike 2000* will be with us in the new millennium.

Claiming to offer the most faithfully modelled bikes, physics, riders and tracks ever seen, *Superbike 2000* will also take motorcycle racing online with a new Internet racing option. Chuck in some two-player split-screen racing and it looks like being thrills and spills for all the family, either at home or hundreds of miles away.

The game also brags new TV-style presentation, with race commentary from TV's Keith Huewen (who?) and has been updated for the 1999 SBK Superbike World Championship Season. With motion captured riders and additional weather effects, expect it to rock big bells.



For those about to rock... Donington.

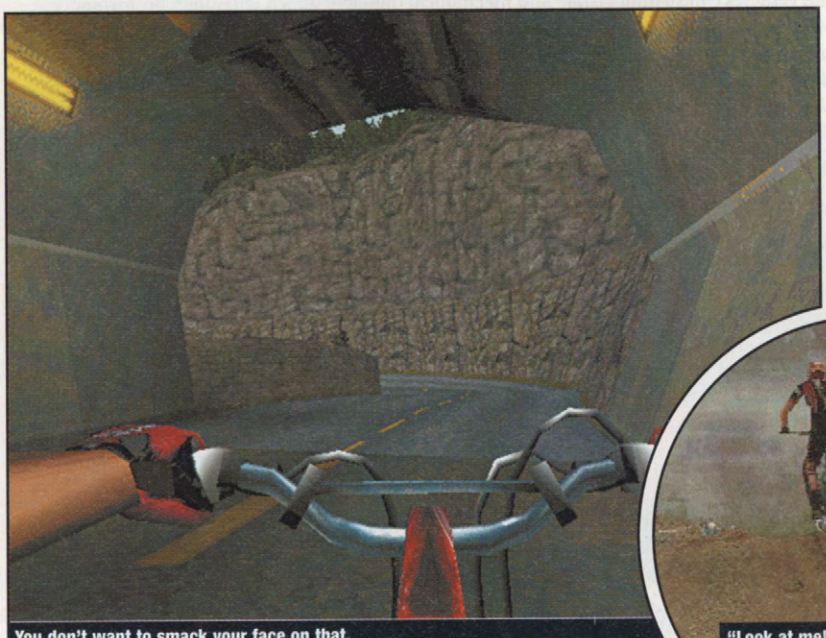
"Nice bum! He must work out."

NO FEAR DOWNHILL MOUNTAIN BIKING

DEVELOPER UDS • **PUBLISHER** Codemasters • **WEBSITE** www.codemasters.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

Traditionally the preferred mode of transport of small-time drug dealers, mountain bikes have yet to make much of an impression on the rarefied world of virtual reality computer games. Until 2000, that is, when *No Fear Downhill Mountain Biking* becomes the first dedicated game of this popular and demanding sport. Serious cuts and bruises, blood splattered legs, aching limbs, dirt and gravel pummelling your skin – none of these should be of any concern as the only injury you're likely to acquire is a chafed thumb.

Set over 11 international locations, from the arid deserts of Morocco to the snow and ice of Sweden, the in-game cyclists pedal, wiggle their bikes, crunch into the saddle after a heavy jump and lean into corners, even placing their feet down for added stability. The action can be viewed from a third person perspective or, for the full effect, from over the handlebars.



You don't want to smack your face on that.



"Look at me! I'm riding a bike."

CARMAGEDDON: THE DEATH RACE 2000

DEVELOPER Torus Games • OUT TBC • PUBLISHER Sci • WEBSITE www.sci.co.uk • OUT TBC

Having come full circle, the next game in the multiple award-winning *Carmageddon* series is named after the film that inspired the original concept. Now developed by Australian outfit Torus Games, this latest incarnation is already reckoned to have twice the frame rate of *Carmageddon II*.

Designed from the ground up for Internet play, the game will boast unique arenas and play modes, with the focus on fast action gameplay in immersive environments. These will take many forms, including Suburbia, which will contain a cinema, a moving bridge and a football pitch. There's also a typical English country estate, complete with golf course, horse stables and a tranquil lake surrounded by deer, all of which should be quite satisfying to run over.

Of course, mowing down zombies will still play a major part of the game, but this time they will be far more aggressive – and even homicidal.



Return of the Max.



Ban this sick filth.

LOOSE CANNON

DEVELOPER Digital Anvil • PUBLISHER Microsoft • WEBSITE www.microsoft.com • OUT Spring 2000



Traffic and everything.



Read the sign, buddy.

Much is expected of Chris Roberts' Digital Anvil studio, not least from publisher Microsoft, and *Loose Cannon* looks like it could well be one of the titles that will help to establish their reputation.

Set in a clichéd future, it features intense mercenary style action, both on foot and in various vehicles. Assuming the role of a ruthless bounty hunter, the game involves traversing a crime-infested United States in pursuit of the leader of a criminal syndicate that has sprung up in the wake of the nation's economic collapse. As a mercenary, you face a broad range of choices, including which missions to accept and whether to proceed on foot or in one of 15 customised vehicles which, if you crash or collide them, may force you to get out of your car to make some repairs, or even steal another.

A blend of realistic driving physics and fast-paced action, *Loose Cannon* looks like being a refreshing mix of genres.

TEST DRIVE 6

DEVELOPER Pitbull • PUBLISHER Infogrames • WEBSITE www.infogrames.com • OUT June 2000



Full marks for perseverance here, as the series reaches the half-dozen mark. *Test Drive 6* promises to be better than ever, and comes replete with 39 unique licensed vehicles, including the muscle of the Dodge Viper GTS, the class of the Jaguar XKR, the growl of the TVR-Speed 12 and the sheer speed of the McLaren F1.

With rocket-fuelled cars, breakable objects, shortcuts and plod constantly on your back, this one could well be worth a look.

F1 RACING SIMULATION

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft • PUBLISHER Video Systems • WEBSITE www.ubisoft.co.uk • OUT September 2000

Monaco Grand Prix Racing Simulation 2 had everything but the official licence. Ubi Soft have addressed this by taking the same engine, tweaking it a bit and adding the details for the 1999 Formula One season.

The game is actually being published by Video Systems, who were responsible for Eidos' *Official Formula One Racing*. Ubi Soft are developing, distributing and marketing it, and tell us it that it's got everything you'd expect in an F1 game plus a few extra treats.

DRIVER 2

DEVELOPER Reflections • PUBLISHER GTInteractive • WEBSITE www.gtinteractive.com • OUT TBC

The game might not have quite lived up to the marketing campaign, but such was its effect that a sequel was almost guaranteed. *Driver 2* could see a shift of location, with bigger cities and perhaps some multi-player options.

So confident are Reflections of its success that they are actually simultaneously working on *Driver 3*, which will inevitably feature the things they couldn't squeeze into *2*. There are no release dates as yet, but don't be surprised if it becomes a Christmas perennial.

RALLY RACING SIMULATION

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft • PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • WEBSITE www.ubisoft.co.uk • OUT September 2000



Based on one of the world's most prestigious and difficult rally championships, Ubi Soft's *Rally Racing Simulation* takes helmet buffers on a high speed tour of the South of France Rally. Featuring the 1998 tracks in their entirety, it includes all 18 stages, and comprises around 360 kilometres of French road.

With over 30 different cars to choose from, *Rally Racing Simulation* looks like rocking fairly large bells, and should be one to watch.

WACKY RACES

DEVELOPER Infogrames • PUBLISHER Infogrames • WEBSITE www.infogrames.com • OUT June 2000

Another crucial element of a Seventies childhood, *Wacky Races* provided many youngsters with their first taste of gambling, with pocket money often laid on the outcome. Those days can now be relived courtesy of Infogrames, as 11 teams employ a variety of tactics to secure that elusive win.

All your favourites are here, from Pat Pending in his Convert-a-car to the Boulder mobile with the Slag Brothers, Rock and Gravel. Odds on Dastardly and Mutley to win, anyone?



ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DIABLO II

DEVELOPER Blizzard • **PUBLISHER** Sierra/Havas Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.blizzard.com • **OUT** March

***Paul Mallinson* updates us on Blizzard's devilish new sequel**

For a game so fundamentally simple, the original *Diablo* managed to generate an inordinate amount of interest from the hard-core role-playing fraternity. All the major forums and message boards were rammed with anal conversations about mythical objects buried deep within and meandering tales of personal adventures in the game. Strange for what was essentially a hack and slash 'em up...

Whether this was because the game gave these usually intensely reclusive people the opportunity to drop their gaming guard for a little while by playing with their friends over the Internet, or simply suck in some honest to goodness eye candy, we'll never know. What we do know though, is that the sequel – yes, *Diablo II* – is almost certain to attract the same kind of games player as its predecessor, because essentially it's more of the same only better.



This is one fight he wished he hadn't picked.

WET DREAM

Since we last saw the game (way back in *PC ZONE* issue 78), we've learned much more about *Diablo II* and what we can expect in terms of gaming enhancement. Because Blizzard have decided to keep the game 2D (with 3D colouring and light-sourcing), they are planning to avoid criticism of their technology by making everything else in it a role-playing gamer's wet dream, from the interface to the graphics, and everything in between.

We've mentioned before that the gameplay world of *Diablo II* will be split into four separate areas, or 'towns', each of which will have one main dungeon, several sub-dungeons and a surrounding wilderness area to explore. We've since learned that these towns are to be as big, if not bigger, than Tristram, the town from the original *Diablo*, making *Diablo II* more than four times bigger than the first game. So far, monastery, desert, and rainforest have been confirmed as towns, with one more town yet to be announced.

"As long as we don't end up with a buggy first release, *Diablo II* could well end up being one of the slickest games ever made"

GO QUEST

Once you've completed all the quests in one town, you will be able to return to it whenever you like, but you will not be allowed to move to another town until your business in the current one is finished. In total there will be at least 20 major quests in the game, all of which will be available in single and multiplayer modes. And, like the above mentioned restriction with the towns, you will only be able to move on to the next quest when you're finished with the one that you've got. Quests that we already know about include: Sister's Burial Ground (battle dead rogues in the Rogue Monastery Burial Grounds), Field Of Stones (re-open an ancient teleportation system in the form of a circle of stones), The Forgotten Tower (clear out a beast-infested tower and search for treasure), Den Of Evil (rid a den of monsters and search for treasure), Tomb Of Tal Rasha (locate the Tomb Of Tal Rasha and prevent Diablo from freeing his brother, Baal). There will be new multiplayer options on Battle.net, including an online trading post and a player ranking system. Multiplayer games will enable up to eight players per game. Blizzard have also already hinted that they hope to release expansion packs that will add more quests to the game.

SKILL TREE

There will be five all-new character classes with unique attributes and abilities (Amazon, Paladin, Necromancer, Barbarian and Sorceress), and 'Skill Trees' unique to each class have been developed to drip special powers and abilities to you as you progress through the story. The skill your character specialises in determines how you get to distribute level-up points. If you choose to go one way with attack skills, you'll be able to gain certain abilities,

MALLO PREDICTS!

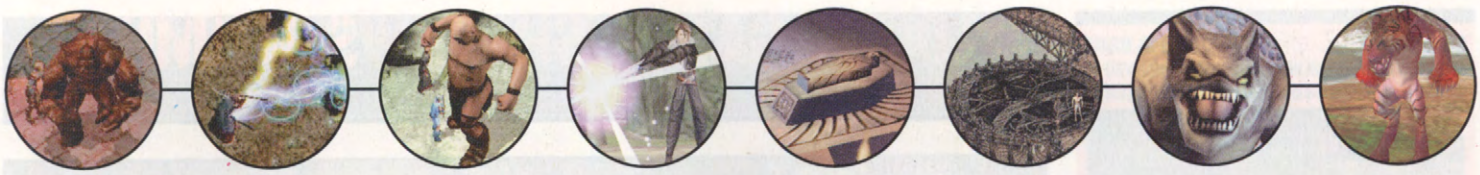
How will *Diablo II* fare against such strong competition?

SYSTEM SHOCK 2 (EA)
A different kettle of fish it may be, but *Diablo II* is going to have to be extra special to knock *System Shock 2* from its current position as 'all-conquering PC RPG'.

BALDUR'S GATE (INTERPLAY)
An excellent RPG, but about to be superseded by *Icewind Dale* and *Baldur's Gate 2* from the same development team. *Diablo II* could end up as a better bet.

REVENANT (EIDOS)
An excellent game, but lacking soul. It owes more than a passing nod to the original *Diablo*, and we doubt that it'll be strong enough to beat *Diablo II*.

LANDS OF LORE III (EA)
Mmm. This game is starting to look very dated next to other 3D RPGs. It's an excellent adventure and a decent piece of programming, but it will pale next to *Diablo II*.



but others will be more difficult to obtain because of that decision. It will not be possible to learn each and every skill, so each character will be forced to specialise. Visually too, your on-screen fighters will be distinguishable – even down to the clothes and armour that they wear – thanks to some nifty built-in equipment/character modelling techniques. Pretty much everything your party wears and uses is shown on screen in minute detail.

HEY, GOOD LOOKING

Blizzard's art department have produced a great deal of significant work recently. Although a good proportion of it is still under wraps (we don't want to ruin it for you now, do we?), we've seen the real-time lighting effects bring to life some truly stunning 3D rendered bitmaps, making it more than easy to forget that *Diablo II* is not the polygonal wank-fest some of us were hoping for. Attention to detail is something that Blizzard have been renowned for in the past, and *Diablo II* promises to continue that trend. Atmospheric effects such as night and day cycles, rain and fog are in there, as are leaves blowing in the breeze, livestock moving from field to field, and rivers flowing in an eerily realistic manner.

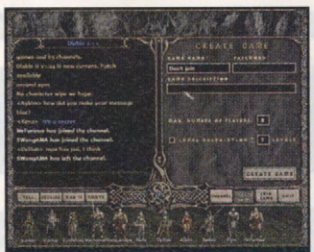
A lot of the monsters too are not only better looking, but also bigger and badder. Take the Blunderbore, for example: a desert-faring beast with a tiny head and huge body. Or the Gargantuan Beast: a big, hairy monster which crushes opponents with its hands. And there's a boatload of other scary creatures. All have improved artificial intelligence, and some are now capable of working together and hunting in packs. As if it wasn't hard enough before...

NO BUGS PLEASE, WE'RE BRITISH

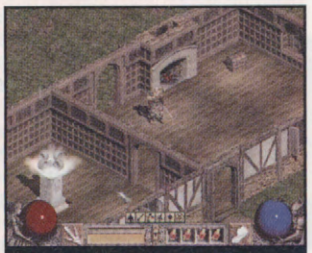
In the end there's no doubting *Diablo II*'s potential. As long as we don't end up with a buggy first release, *Diablo II* could well end up being one of the slickest games ever made. Even the menus look sexy, sleek and superbly designed. Blizzard know what they've got, know the people who want it, and are promising to deliver early next year. And, providing we're not eating our words thanks to 'slippage' come next November, *PC ZONE* will be the first to playtest it for you. Watch out for a full review and a final verdict soon.



Non-player characters sometimes join you to fight for your cause. In this case you need their help.


A shot of the new, improved multiplayer menu.


Notice the moody blue lighting? *Diablo II* will be full of that.


This place is a bit sparse. Who nicked the bleedin' furniture?!


Difficulty levels have been removed because the game automatically adjusts as you play.


Atmospheric effects such as day and night cycles, weather effects, and new sound effects are included.


In addition to the usual magic and unique items, new, extremely rare items have been added.

THAT ALL-IMPORTANT STORYLINE

In a nutshell, here's what *Diablo II* is all about...

As the game opens, the hero (after containing Diablo's spirit in the first game) journeys to the East and assumes Diablo's original appearance and power. He then marches off to raise an army to aid him in his conquest of the world. Diablo's plans unveil as the game progresses: he's attempting to free his brothers, Baal (the Lord of Destruction) and Mephisto (the Lord of Hatred), in order to reinstate the triumvirate of evil. What this means in gaming terms is that you're in deep trouble and must hack up loads of monsters to prevent the bad guys from winning.


Some very nice ethereal lighting effects, yesterday.


Is this what they mean by 'running hot-foot'?

SUMMONER

DEVELOPER Volition, Inc. • **PUBLISHER** THQ • **WEBSITE** www.volition-inc.com • **OUT** Autumn 2000



Volition are boasting that their new RPG *Summoner* will have "the best 3D rendering engine ever seen in an RPG", and looking at what they've whipped up so far they could be right. With pausable real-time combat, "jaw-dropping" spell effects, party-based multiplayer, and a dynamic, free-roaming camera, *Summoner* could well end up being something rather special for publisher THQ.

ARCATERA

DEVELOPER Westka Kommunikations • **PUBLISHER** Ubi Soft • **WEBSITE** www.ubisoft.co.uk • **OUT** Spring 2000

Apparently 12 years in the making, that certainly didn't appear to be the case with *Arcatera* when we saw it last summer. Now though, this side-on adventure/RPG hybrid seems to be coming together nicely. *Arcatera* is a medieval game with a huge world featuring lots of different towns, inhabitants, cultures, religions, devils and demons, monsters, secrets and unresolved quests.

POOL OF RADIANCE: RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR

DEVELOPER Stormfront Studios • **PUBLISHER** Mindscape • **WEBSITE** www.mindscape.com • **OUT** Winter 2000



The latest game in SSI's decades-old 'Gold Box' AD&D series will take you on a journey to Myth Drannor, one of the most dangerous places ever created for the famed *Forgotten Realms* campaign setting. Using third-edition AD&D rules, *Ruins Of Myth Drannor* will hopefully take isometric role-playing to a peak with highly detailed visuals and compelling single and multiplayer scenarios.

ASHERON'S CALL

DEVELOPER Turbine Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** Microsoft • **WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/games/ • **OUT** Imminent



Microsoft's massively multiplayer role-playing world recently went live over in the US, and is rapidly gathering a significantly large fan base. The pull with this particular online RPG is that you're actively encouraged to join up and work with as many other people as possible – the more allies you acquire, the greater your influence becomes.

LEGEND OF THE BLADEMASTERS

DEVELOPER Ronin Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** Ripcord Games • **WEBSITE** www.blademasters.com • **OUT** Mid 2000

We don't know a great deal about *Legend Of The Blademasters*, except that it's being described as an action/adventure/RPG and that, visually at least, there's a healthy animé influence presiding over the whole project. Apparently resource management features are included, along with tactical combat and plenty of magic, not to mention a modicum of Japanese-style craziness.

BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN

DEVELOPER BioWare Corp • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.interplay.com • **OUT** Autumn 2000

The sequel to the surprise RPG hit of '99, *Shadows Of Amn* promises to take the popular *Baldur's Gate* series even further with tons of new additions and a load of game enhancements. You'll be able to import your characters from the original *Baldur's Gate* into this game (but not the other way around), as well as custom character portrait art and your own digital speech. There'll be a full-screen mode this time around, and the cut-scenes can now be skipped if you so wish (yay!). On top of that there have been improvements and fixes to pathing, journal management, interface (with new 'Byzantine brown stone' look!), dialogue and multiplayer (no more annoying pauses during conversations). Combine that with full 3D card support, more than 100 new sub-plots, new weapons, and the fact that there'll be far fewer 'empty' areas to explore than in its predecessor, and you're looking at *Shadows Of Amn* being one of the biggest and most complex RPGs ever released on PC.



Bigger monsters, better animation. Scary.

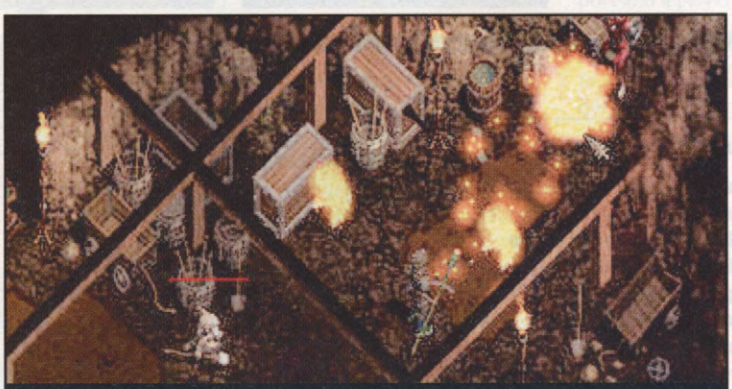
Are you looking at me? Or him. Or her, or the elf?

NOX

DEVELOPER Westwood • **PUBLISHER** EA • **WEBSITE** www.westwood.com • **OUT** Imminent



Nox promises unbridled power for would-be mages everywhere.



Despite all the warnings, Tyrone attempted the dreaded halitosis spell.

When Westwood first showed off their new isometric RPG at a conference last summer, the crowds could hardly contain their excitement. The brilliant isometric graphics and the wonderful line of sight system (which cleverly blacks out unseen areas on the fly – wait till you see it moving) may have had something to do with it, but the fact that the game didn't take itself too seriously that also appealed. After all, how could any game with a central character called Jack, who's a car mechanic from a trailer park in south central Florida, take itself seriously?

Regardless, Jack is flung into the recesses of *Nox* – a world of dark, light and magic (and probably goblins) – as either a warrior, conjuror or wizard, and is presented with 33 chapters of skulduggery to uncover. The single-player game is pretty much complete and in test, with the implementation of the multiplayer features now coming to fruition.

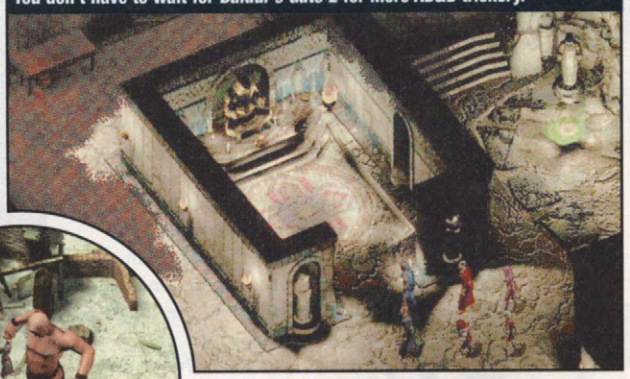
ICEWIND DALE

DEVELOPER Black Isle Studios • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.interplay.com • **OUT** First half of 2000

If you're the kind of role-playing nut who prefers classic dungeon-based adventuring to wandering through the hills and dales of some far-flung fantasy land, then Bioware's forthcoming *Icewind Dale*, based on the trilogy of books by Robert Salvatore, should be right up your street.

Using a modified version of the famed Infinity engine (as seem in *Baldur's Gate* and *Planescape: Torment*), and fashioned from the omnipotent *Forgotten Realms* AD&D campaign setting, *Icewind Dale* is a six-party single or multi-player RPG with more than 50 deep, dark dungeon levels to hack and slash your way through (the developers are saying that this number will increase as production continues). These dungeons will be accessible from ten completely diverse environments, from ice-filled mountain passes leading to steamy geothermal cave systems, to tunnels carved through the heart of a living glacier, all of which will be populated with some *seriously* huge new monsters (Black Isle are sticking to the Monstrous Manual on this one), plus the usual shedload of yappy NPCs.

You don't have to wait for *Baldur's Gate 2* for more AD&D trickery.





Trust a bald giant to ruin the party.



You want dungeons to explore? There are 50 here, so take your pick.

FINAL FANTASY VIII

DEVELOPER Squaresoft • **PUBLISHER** Eidos • **WEBSITE** www.squaresoft.com • **OUT** Winter 2000

The sequel to one of the biggest games of all time, *Final Fantasy VIII* is the latest in a long line of quirky Japanese RPGs from development giants Squaresoft. This time the usual crazy, over-the-top storyline follows the exploits of one Squall Leonhart, a military school cadet with a relentless drive to join an elite mercenary unit called SeeD. His final test as a graduating cadet of SeeD is to settle the growing hostilities between the neighbouring countries of Galbadia and Dollet. What was already a confusing set of events takes a turn for the worst when Galbadia begins its invasion on the rest of the world and the shit really hits the fan.

FFVIII has done more then 3,500,000 copies in Japan alone.



Ouch! That certainly looks painful.





No wires and no mirrors. This is just old-fashioned magic.

À la *FFVII*, *Final Fantasy VIII* will mix pseudo turn-based combat, adventuring elements and daft dialogue to varying degrees of success. The PlayStation version met with some criticism recently, although there's no doubting the game's overall quality and staying power. At the end of the day, though, *Final Fantasy* fans will doubtless lap it up.

GOOD & EVIL

DEVELOPER Cavedog • **PUBLISHER** GT • **WEBSITE** www.cavedog.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



Ron Gilbert, the man behind the hugely funny *Monkey Island* adventures, is planning to merge RTS-style combat, puzzle-based adventuring and RPG-like depth of character in *Good & Evil*, a new party-based RPG with an ever-changing environment. Mixing classic fantasy motifs with pirates, the Wild West, kung fu fighters, cyborgs and mobsters, *Good & Evil* promises to have us rolling in the aisles rather than rolling eight-sided dice.

GOTHIC

DEVELOPER Piranha Bytes • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.piranha-bytes.com • **OUT** March



Gothic, an upcoming title from German developer Piranha Bytes, will attempt to introduce a real sense of consequence to the computer role-playing genre, because the programmers have developed a complex 'neural network' memory system for all of the 200 NPCs that inhabit the game. Technologically the game seems quite advanced, and the dark nature of the visuals should appeal to Goths everywhere.

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK

DEVELOPER 989 Studios • **PUBLISHER** Sony • **WEBSITE** www.everquest.com • **OUT** March



Sony's ever-popular online role-playing game is due a make-over in the form of an expansion pack called *The Ruins Of Kunark*. An all-new continent, more than 20 new adventure zones, numerous characters, an additional playable race and an enhanced 3D engine are all on the cards. Existing *EverQuest* players will be able to purchase the expansion pack directly online, but a final price has yet to be decided upon.

EON

DEVELOPER Computerhouse/Neogames **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.eongame.com • **OUT** TBA

Eon, based on an original, Swedish fantasy role-playing game, is being put together by some guys who claim that: "If magic would indeed exist in our world, it could very well work as it does in *Eon*." Which, roughly translated, means they're attempting to cross real life with orcs and goblins. Whether that'll work or not remains to be seen. As an isometric RPG, though, it could be alright. We'll just have to wait and see.

CRUSADERS OF MIGHT & MAGIC

DEVELOPER 3DO • **PUBLISHER** Ubi Soft • **WEBSITE** www.3do.com • **OUT** March



In *Crusaders Of Might & Magic*, you play a young warrior called Drake, whose family has been killed by the undead. Your mission is based on revenge (always a worthy motivation) and involves lots of traps, sword fights, story and role-playing. Lavish 3D graphics will bring the series out of the graphical doldrums, but the *Tomb Raider*-style gameplay may put off some hard-core purists.

STORMBRINGER: ELRIC OF MELNIBONE

DEVELOPER Snowball Interactive • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.snowball.ru • **OUT** Spring 2001



Stormbringer: Elric Of Melnibone is an RPG/adventure based on the first novel of Michael Moorcock's Elric saga, and at this particular moment in time the game is still at a very early stage of its design. Despite that, we do know that it'll be about the tragedy faced by an albino prince as he tries to make some meaning of his own existence. Which sounds, er, something like a sure-fire hit, yes?

ATRIARCH

DEVELOPER World Fusion • **PUBLISHER** World Fusion • **WEBSITE** www.atriarch.com • **OUT** Mid-late 2000



The year 2000 is gearing up to become the 'year of the massively multiplayer online role-playing game' by the looks of it, with *Atriarch* joining the ever-growing list of titles. This one will be set on the organic alien world of Atriana, and will be modelled in full 3D. In it you're able to build an empire, run the local market, or adventure through the untamed wilderness killing defenceless creatures for fun.

HORIZONS

DEVELOPER Artifact Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** Artifact Entertainment • **WEBSITE** www.artifact-entertainment.com • **OUT** Autumn 2000



Strange name, massively multiplayer game. *Horizons* takes place in the world of Istaria. One of the game's most unique features is that the world is supportive of land, air, subterranean and sea exploration: dragons fly through the sky, dwarves mine underground, Lamurians swim in the sea, and humanoids roam the land (because that's where all the pubs are).

SWORDS & SORCERY: COME DEVILS, COME DARKNESS

DEVELOPER Heuristic Park • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** www.heuristic.com • **OUT** TBA



This first-person RPG was once owned by Virgin Interactive, and – after they shut up shop in the States – was then acquired by Westwood Studios. Back in August the game's designer, DW Bradley, bought back the rights and went looking for another publisher, the result of his search being as yet unannounced. Apparently the game is almost completed, and will be renamed before its release.

DRAGONFLIGHT: CHRONICLES OF PERN

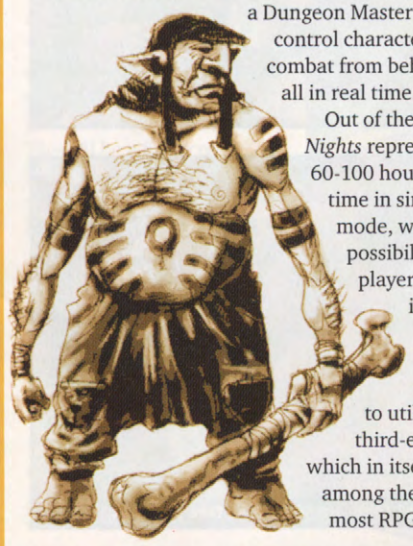
DEVELOPER Grolier Interactive • **PUBLISHER** TBA • **WEBSITE** http://pern.grolier.co.uk • **OUT** Mid-2000

Despite Grolier Interactive's recent withdrawal from publishing, development of their in-house RPG continues, with a final publisher yet to be decided upon. *Dragonflight*, based on the best-selling books by Anne McCaffrey, gives you the chance to develop your character by taking him through a military dragon-riding school. So prepare for plenty of 'seat of the pants' action.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

DEVELOPER BioWare Corp • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** http://neverwinter.net • **OUT** Mid-2000

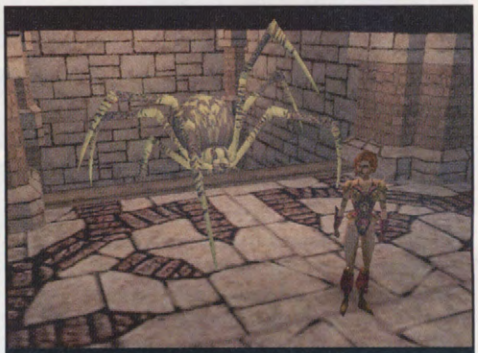
From BioWare, the developers of *Baldur's Gate*, comes the brand new AD&D role-playing game *Neverwinter Nights*. Not only has the game been designed specifically for the online multiplayer environment and the latest in 3D technology, it also enables you to experience all the magic of pen-and-paper 'Dungeon Mastering' from inside your PC. Using *Neverwinter Nights*' powerful, user-friendly Solstice Toolset, you can create and populate entire new modular worlds and create your own stories for others to adventure in. Even better, enter a multiplayer module as a Dungeon Master and you can control characters, and manage combat from behind the scenes, all in real time.



Out of the box, *Neverwinter Nights* represents between 60-100 hours of playing time in single-player mode, with infinite possibilities in multi-player. On top of that, it will be one of the first licensed AD&D computer games to utilise TSR's new third-edition rule set, which in itself puts the cat among the pigeons for most RPG purists.



Protecting coffins has never been so much fun.



Wow! Look at those legs! No, not hers!

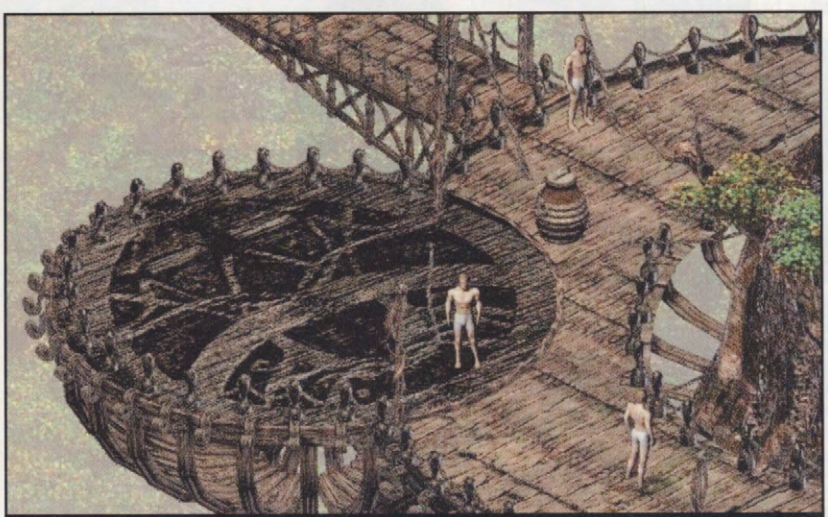
ARCANUM: OF STEAMWORKS AND MAGICK OBSCURA

DEVELOPER Troika Games • **PUBLISHER** Sierra • **WEBSITE** www.sierra.com • **OUT** Autumn 2000

With a title like that you'd expect to find something pretty beardy-weirdy by usual gaming standards, but *Fallout* creators Troika Games' *Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura* actually seems like quite an interesting twist on the usual fantasy theme.

Set in an age of industrial revolution, the game takes England at the turn of the 19th century as its inspiration but populates it with dwarves, gnomes, humans, halflings and orcs – instead of cloth-capped, jug-eared old people – and the results look simply marvellous.

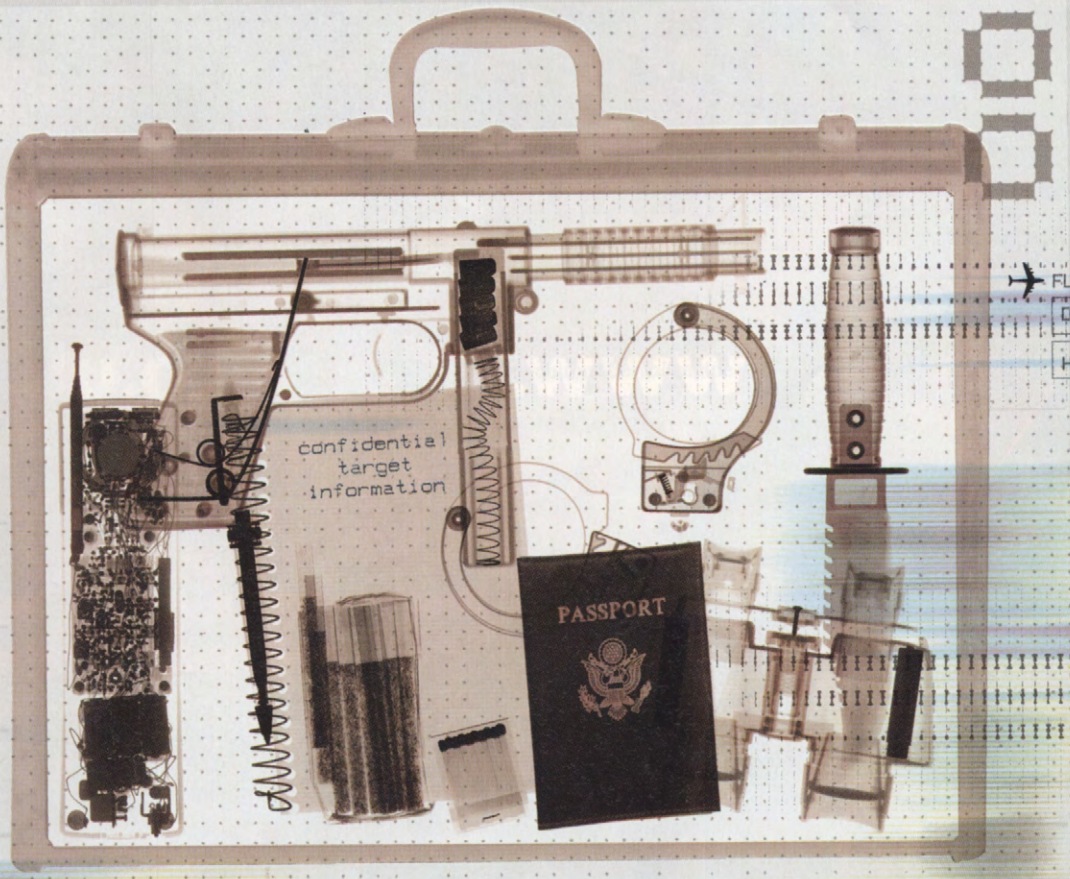
Although *Arcanum* looks pretty normal for an RPG (quite similar to *Fallout* for some strange reason), it does in fact have a unique feature that makes it stand out from the crowd: the character system, which is completely classless. There's no choosing fighter, cleric or mage; in this you simply develop your fighter from scratch in any direction you want. With real-time/turn-based combat modes and a deep and complex statistical system underlying every event, *Arcanum* could be a hard-core RPG freak's dream.



In *Arcanum* everyone walks around in just their knicks.



sometimes negotiation requires more than a handshake



FLIGHT
D BAA6054 26B
H UST3001

■ exec scan procedure.....
security level COV9.....
.....clearance granted.



Thirty real-to-life missions spanning five continents, plus innovative multi-player modes.



3-D accelerated Quake II™ engine, upgraded with GHOUL rendering system for unprecedented detail and faster gameplay.



Story-driven plotline with ultra-realistic weapons, enemies & environments.

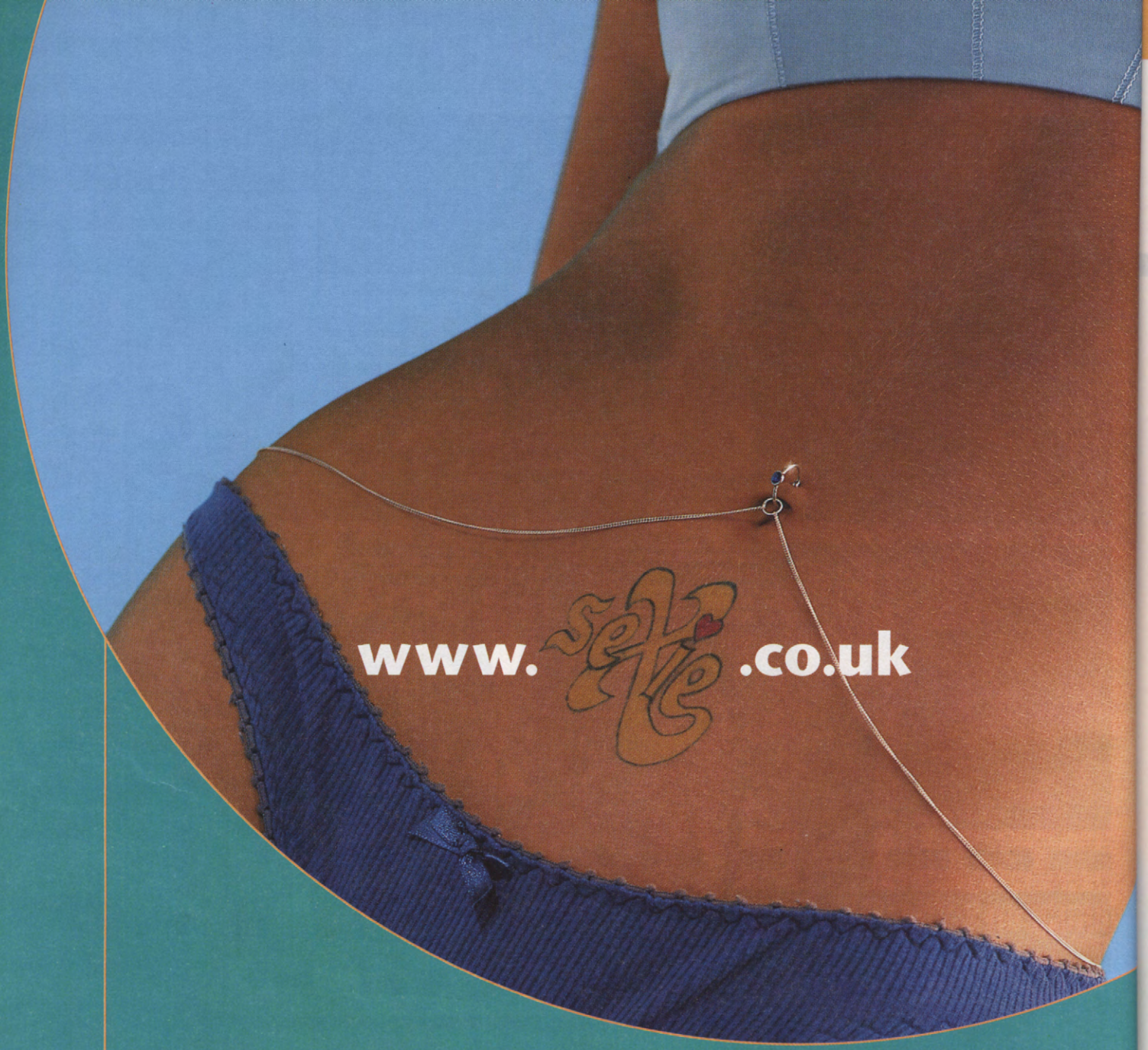
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WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE – HEART OF GAIA

DEVELOPER Dreamforge Entertainment • PUBLISHER ASC Games • WEBSITE www.ascgames.com • OUT Imminent

Developers ASC Games said simply that *Werewolf* is "a game that had to be made". Like *Vampire: The Masquerade Redemption* (Activision), *Werewolf: The Apocalypse – Heart Of Gaia* is based on a White Wolf role-playing system.



Werewolf: action-adventure with role-playing elements.

We hope *Werewolf* doesn't turn out to be another *Wheel Of Time*.

Unlike vampires, which are soulless parasitic creatures that breed humans like cattle, the werewolves in this particular campaign setting are good creatures that have been put on the earth to protect it from the ravages of the human race.

Werewolf is aimed at people who liked *Quake*, *Duke Nukem* and *Jedi Knight*, but wanted more from their game in terms of depth. To achieve this, ASC have licensed and modified the ubiquitous *Unreal* engine to do their bidding, and have squeezed in some spectacular morphing effects to portray the agonising change from human to beast. And, because there'd be no point investing time in an effect that no one can see, ASC are making the game third-person.

BLACK & WHITE

DEVELOPER Lionhead • PUBLISHER EA • WEBSITE www.lionhead.com • OUT TBA

Peter Molyneux and Lionhead Studios are now claiming that *Black & White*, their hugely anticipated new-genre hybrid, is more of an RPG than anything else, because of the way your character develops its personality based on the way you control the game world. In some ways *Black & White* could be called a GRPG (God role-playing game), because of the way it mixes strategy and character development.

By manipulating the indigenous inhabitants of a green and pleasant land called Eden, you gain access to a host of spectacular spells, and can use them to progress by good means or evil. And the nature of your character, and your surroundings, develops as a result of that progression. If you tend towards using evil magic (destructive, fear-invoking spells), then your homelands physically alter in accordance with this.

To us, *Black & White* looks like being good, old, 'naughty' fun. But then we're all sick and depraved anyway. If you're bad and want to be good, or good and want to be bad, then *Black & White* is sure to let you assume that role.



Good or evil – it's your call.

No! Four legs good, two legs bad.



The world of *Black & White*. It's taking rather more than seven days to create.

ANARCHY ONLINE

DEVELOPER Funcom • PUBLISHER Funcom • WEBSITE www.anarchy-online.com • OUT First half of 2000



Anarchy Online is another massively multiplayer RPG, but unlike most of the others around it's set on a planet in the far-off future – 29,475 AD, to be exact. This planet, the mining outpost of Rubi-Ka, is ravaged by conflict between the governing corporation Omni-Tek, and the rebel clans fighting the regime. With an extensive clan/team system and moody 3D graphics, *Anarchy Online* looks like one to watch.

SOULBRINGER

DEVELOPER Infogrames Sheffield • PUBLISHER Infogrames • WEBSITE www.gremlin.co.uk • OUT Early 2000

If we have to wait much longer for Infogrames' *Soulbringer*, then we'll be forced to eat our own goolies for Lent. Spawned from the minds of the people who made *Realms Of The Haunting* (which we're big fans of), *Soulbringer* is more of a traditional RPG, but with serious occult leanings rather than beardy-weirdy fluffiness. Which sounds scary enough in itself.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE DARK

DEVELOPER Studio Blue • PUBLISHER TBA • WEBSITE www.studioblue.com • OUT TBA



The makers of *Deliverance From The Dark* know exactly what they're up against – Blizzard's *Diablo II*. Studio Blue's tactical, fantasy, isometric, party-based RPG bears a striking resemblance to the aforementioned game, and is likely to come out around the same time. So after seeing Blizzard's baby, Studio Blue recently pushed back their development schedule to add dynamic lighting.

SEEKER: ONE – THE STORY OF MIMB

DEVELOPER The Logic Factory • PUBLISHER TBA • WEBSITE www.logicfactory.com • OUT Spring

Seeker is an action role-playing adventure game described by developers The Logic Factory as having "the concept of a big PC-based RPG, that has some of the elements of *Baldur's Gate* and *Diablo*, combined with the full 3D interactivity of *Mario64* or *Zelda* for the consoles". Not only that, but *Seeker* will also be massively multiplayer too.

HERO'S JOURNEY

DEVELOPER Simutronics • PUBLISHER Simutronics • WEBSITE www.hjvault.com • OUT Late 2000



Believe it or not, Simutronics have been making online RPGs for more than 10 years. *Hero's Journey* differs from their other games (*Gemstone* and *DragonRealms* being their most famous offerings) because it's not text-based, it's a spinny-rotatey 3D masterpiece. But 10 years making online RPGs is not to be sniffed at, and we reckon *Hero's Journey* will give even *UO* a run for its money when it's launched.

GUNLOK

DEVELOPER Rebellion • PUBLISHER TBC • WEBSITE www.rebellion.co.uk • OUT April 2000

Having coded the scary *Aliens Vs Predator* game, you can expect big things from this RPG that's packed with robots battling against the evil cyborgs. And the title? Well at least it's more original than Robots v Cyborgs.

MILITARY AND SPACE

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS 2: THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

DEVELOPER Wayward Designs • **PUBLISHER** Hasbro Interactive/MicroProse • **WEBSITE** www.microprose.com • **OUT** March 2000

World War II. What is it good for? Some say absolutely nothing, but Dave Mathieson thanks it for ushering in a new breed of flight sims

Imagine the scenario. A military coup in the Faroe Islands leads to persecution of its ethnic Welsh population. All diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis have failed. In a last ditch effort to stop the genocide, your crack F16 squadron has been given a mandate to bomb things until they blow up. *F16 – Operation Sheep* from Shitesoft features 12 square miles of accurately modelled terrain etc, etc.

OK, this may be being a tad unfair to jet sims, but you can't deny that one of the best things to happen to flight sims recently is the rediscovery of World War II as worthy subject matter. Back in those days they knew how to have proper wars, with death tolls of millions, proper baddies you could really hate, and not enough bananas. But even more important is the fact that WWII planes were far cooler than their modern counterparts. And coolest daddy-O of them all was the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress.

> **"Every now and again, a sim comes along that gives the whole genre a kick in the pants, and *B-17* looks like it more than fits the bill"**

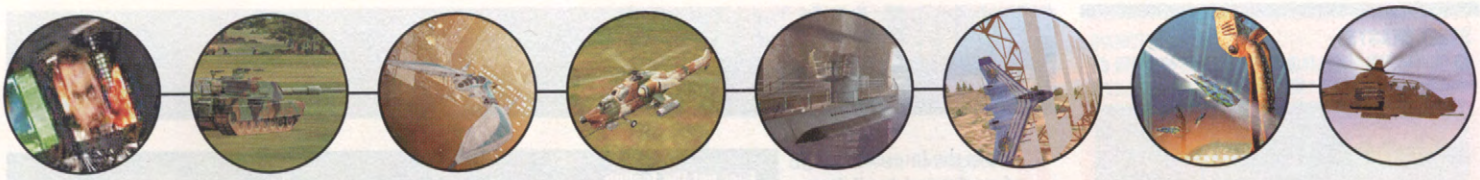
Like its country of origin, the B-17 is big, not very pretty, and in possession of an unhealthy amount of guns. Thousands and thousands of these big shiny things were used on raids over Europe, striking fear into the hearts of anyone that didn't live in a magic bomb-proof house. Unlike the RAF, the US Eighth Air Force concentrated on daylight raids which is why the B-17 carried up to 13.50 calibre machine guns, covering all possible angles of attack. Being a bomber, the B-17 obviously also carried lots of bombs, which came in handy for blowing things up.

THE REAL THING

There are games out at the moment that let you fly a B-17 (*Fighter Squadron, Air Warrior III*), but none that come close to modelling the complexities of the real thing. *B-17 Flying Fortress 2: The Mighty Eighth*, from Wayward Design, looks like it's going to flatten all previous attempts (and other flight sims) with a scary amount of realism, an awesome new graphics engine, and missions and campaigns so



In *B17* you don't just get to fly bombers, you get a go in American and German fighters too.



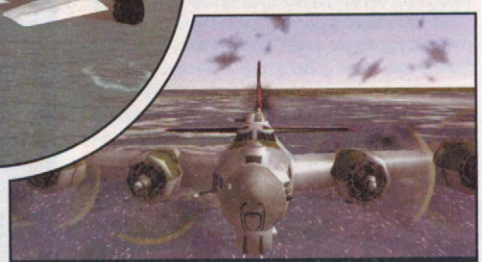


You can really hamper the Nazi war effort by bombing farmland and small woods.

In an attempt to give Germans lead poisoning, Allied pilots often shot at water.



Of course, *B17* will be riddled with multiplayer options.



Flak often caused as many problems as German fighters. And that nasty black smoke necessitated a quick hair wash once safely back at base.

engrossing that you'll buy a big jar of Brylcreem, start listening to Glen Miller, and fancy your granny's mates in old pictures.

The big thing about *B-17 2* is the sheer amount you have to do, as you can take control of any of the crew members – pilot, bombardier or gunners. Of course, you can't control them all at once, but they're well capable of taking care of things without your cack-handed efforts. The characters themselves use motion-captured animation, and they move and react beautifully – if they get hit, they collapse to the floor, if a gun jams, they try to get it working again, if there's a fire, they let you know. The animation is so good that the men cast shadows as they move – incredible stuff.

Although manning a B-17 sounds like a full-time job, this game isn't limited to the bomber and, if you fancy something a bit more nippy, the game also lets you escort the bombers in a Mustang, or even have a go at shooting them down flying for the Luftwaffe.

The cockpit controls themselves aren't the usual simplified version of the real thing – every lever and dial you can see in the views in *B-17 2* can be activated, and since the internal views are directly modelled on the real plane, this means that the game has all the controls of the real plane.

As you'd expect, Wayward have also gone all out for realism when it comes to modelling damage and flight characteristics. If you turn too hard on the ground, the undercarriage will break and your wing will plough into the ground. Get shot up by a German fighter and you'll see holes appearing in the metal skin of your plane, revealing the skeleton beneath. You also get engine fires to deal with, and with no on-board R2 droid to activate fire extinguishers and carry out in-flight welding, things can get a bit dicey.

No flight sim worth its salt lacks some form of campaign mode, and *B-17 2* is no exception. The game contains over 200 targets that are used when missions are being created, and the targets selected depend on the situation at the time so no two campaigns are ever the same. The campaign is also fully dynamic, and the targets and threats over different areas change as the war progresses. There are training missions as well, and quick-start scenarios that dump you right in it.

Of course, whenever a new sim comes out one of the first things everyone wants to know about are the in-game graphics. Needless to say, in *B-17 2* they're top-notch. As we've already mentioned, the cockpits and crew members are gorgeously rendered, with dynamic lighting and shadow effects. The external views of the planes are equally pleasing to the eye, and if you look carefully you can see crew members going about their business through the glass.

SEE THE SIGHTS

But the best visuals in *B-17 2* are reserved for the terrain, and Wayward appear to have come up with something pretty revolutionary. All flight sims use either photo-realistic textures, which can look great high up, but a bit blocky close in, or pre-rendered ones that tend to look artificial. The terrain in *B-17 2* uses new bump mapping code to create proper 3D ground detail that is correctly illuminated, casting proper shadows that grow longer as the sun gets lower in the sky. While a few bumps and shadows may not sound exactly earth-shattering, the effect these subtle touches have on the believability of the whole experience is awesome, and flying low gives a fantastic sense of speed and imminent death.

Every now and again, a new sim comes along that gives the whole genre a kick in the pants, and *B-17 2* looks like it more than fits the bill – original subject matter, plenty to do apart from just fly the plane, detailed mission planning and campaigns, multiplayer with up to 10 players manning the same plane, and graphics that'll make your head fall off – in short, total immersion. Watch out for a review as soon as we can lay our grubby hands on a copy. PCZ



Crew members in *B17* move and talk just like the real ones did (except the ones that were dead).

THE COMPETITION

As we've already said, historical sims are popular at the moment. Here are our current faves:

EUROPEAN AIR WAR Tons of planes to fly, big battles, good support for lower spec PCs.
JANE'S WWII FIGHTERS Again, lots of planes, lovely graphics.
FIGHTER SQUADRON Nice graphics, you can fly bombers as well as fighters.
MIG ALLEY Original scenario with planes not often seen in sims, great campaign engine.
MICROSOFT COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR Accessible, lots of photo-realistic terrain.

What does *B-17 2* have that these don't? Better graphics (particularly terrain), more realism (it features all controls in the real planes) and a better campaign engine. Where it loses out is that it has a smaller choice of planes, and probably won't be as crap PC-friendly as *EAW*.

STEEL BEASTS

DEVELOPER TBC • **PUBLISHER** eSim • **WEBSITE** www.esimgames.com/ • **OUT** TBC



As Microprose have discovered with their *M1 Tank Platoon* series, planes aren't the only pieces of military hardware out there worth simulating, and *Steel Beasts* is another sim based around the M1A1 Abrams. Like *M1TP2*, *Steel Beasts* involves controlling a whole platoon of tanks, as well as artillery, air support, etc. It also promises strong AI for your other tanks, as well as the chance to drive the German Leopard tank.

ENEMY ENGAGED: COMANCHE HOKUM

DEVELOPER Razorworks • **PUBLISHER** Empire Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.empire.co.uk • **OUT** March

As a logical progression to Razorwork's *Apache Havok*, this sim will allow you to pilot two of the world's deadliest attack helicopters – the US's RAH-66 Comanche stealth gunship and the the Russian Ka-52 Hokum-B.

From the makers of *Enemy Engaged: Apache Havoc*. comes three new war zones, Taiwan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia/Yemen, covering huge (400kmx200km) landscapes and features a vastly improved 3D engine (there are no fixed cockpits, only virtual ones), similar avionics and familiar, dynamic gameplay. Promising full multiplayer functions and compatibility with *Apache Havoc*, this promises to be everything a good sequel should be.

FREELANCER

DEVELOPER Digital Anvil • **PUBLISHER** Microsoft • **WEBSITE** www.digitalanvil.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

Another release from Chris Roberts' Digital Anvil team, *Freelancer* is a space sim that follows the go-anywhere model rather than having scripted missions. You can ferry cargo, nick other people's, or just zoom around gawping at asteroids – something worth doing as the graphics engine is touted to knock the spots of anything else out there. Massive multiplayer support is planned as well.

FLYING HEROES

DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks • **PUBLISHER** Take2 • **WEBSITE** www.illusionsoftworks.com • **OUT** TBC



An unusual kind of flight sim, *Flying Heroes* is in no way based on current US Air Force fighter technology, but it's set in a fantasy world where the inhabitants compete in air tournaments. Instead of F16s, there are flying lizards, giant birds and strange machines, each with their own pros and cons. The graphics promise to be novel and impressive, although a lack of air-to-ground radar modes may put off the hardened sim fan.

TERMINUS

DEVELOPER Vicarious Visions • **PUBLISHER** Vatical Entertainment • **WEBSITE** www.vicariousvisions.com • **OUT** Early 2000



More space exploration, fighting and trading comes in the form of *Terminus*, which promises a totally alive environment, with inhabitants carrying on whether you're there or not. The game spans the entire Solar System, with 18 space stations and hundreds of characters to interact with. Pick one of four careers, all set 200 years in the future, and indulge in its continuous storyline.

STARLANCER

DEVELOPER Digital Anvil • **PUBLISHER** Microsoft • **WEBSITE** www.digitalanvil.com • **OUT** March 2000

This is the latest offering from Digital Anvil, home of Chris Roberts, creator of the *Wing Commander* series of space combat games. These games brought a mixture of real-time 3D simulation and immersive story lines together on the PC. *Starlancer* is similar in concept, but set in a whole new universe, with new characters and story to match.

The setting is original in that it's not too far into the future, at the point when the countries of Earth are starting to carve up the Solar System. *Starlancer* has plenty of ships (over 80), dynamic missions where your performance affects the game world, and a full-on story with plenty of cut-scenes and speech.

One of the big problems that space sims have is trying to convince you that you're in an authentic environment. *Starlancer* will feature neutral ships going about their business and 3D in-ship walkabouts to help make it all seem that bit more real.



Ever get the feeling somebody's watching you?



The cream of the space combat crop.

M1 TANK PLATOON 3

DEVELOPER MicroProse • **PUBLISHER** Hasbro Interactive / MicroProse • **WEBSITE** www.microprose.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



The Americans sneakily drop nice Cuban cigars over Russian lines to get them to give away their positions.

Quick! Shoot those blokes. They're carrying shovels on their backs. They could be planting a shrubbery.

MicroProse's first *Tank Platoon* game came out years ago, and was a real favourite among tank fans, partly because it was the only decent tank sim around. The second in the series, *M1 Tank Platoon 2*, came out a couple of years ago to a pretty rapturous welcome, largely because it was so good, but also because, again, it was the only serious contender.

This third version is more of an evolutionary step from the second game. The main improvements are in the heavily updated graphics engine (the same as that featured in *Gunship III)* and AI, in particular the infantry. You'll also get to control more vehicles, however, which should widen the scope of the game, and the user interface will be improved as well. But best of all, the game will link up with *Gunship III* for some hectic multiplayer action – although a battle between a tank and an Apache could be a bit one-sided.

TACHYON: THE FRINGE

DEVELOPER NovaLogic • **PUBLISHER** NovaLogic • **WEBSITE** www.novalogic.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

Like the excellent *Privateer*, and *Elite* before that, *Tachyon* is one of those freeform, do-what-you-like space sims where you're a mercenary travelling the Fringe looking for ways to earn cash and buy yourself a bigger ship and groovier weapons.

The Fringe is a part of the universe that's being fought over between the Bora Rebels and the powerful GalSpan Corporation. As a mercenary, you obviously don't give a toss about the politics of the situation, so you can join either side depending on whether you want to be a defender of oppressed peoples or bully-boy corporate gangster (or you could base your choice on who has the prettiest ships).



If that glare is anything to go by, you'll need your sunglasses out there.

The open-ended format of *Tachyon* is something that has been lacking from space sims for a long time and, if the gameplay, graphics and general atmosphere of *Tachyon* turn out as expected, NovaLogic could have a real winner on their hands.



This is where you get to arm your ship with the best plasma-burst warhead that money can buy.

GUNSHIP III

DEVELOPER MicroProse• **PUBLISHER** Hasbro Interactive/MicroProse • **WEBSITE** www.novalogic.com • **OUT** Early 2000



Aaah. That's more like it. A Russian chopper.

Like *M1 Tank Platoon 3, Gunship III* has a long and distinguished family history on the PC. The first in the series came out when terrain graphics consisted of a green rectangle occupying the bottom half of the screen. *Gunship 2000,* the second in the series, was a lot more sophisticated, but is still ancient history. From what we've seen of this latest version, it's been well worth the wait.

The graphics engine is the same as that used in *M1 Tank Platoon 3*, ie a much improved version of *M1TP2's,* with larger battlefields, better AI and more varied scenery. There's a decent choice of helicopters: the Apache (of course), Cobra, Eurocopter Tiger and Havoc. There's also a smart autopilot that means that you can occupy the gunner position and the AI pilot will do more than just hover or continue in a straight line. Finally, you'll be able to link *Gunship III* up with *M1TP3* for that true interactive battlefield experience.



An Apache? In a helicopter sim? Christ!

PARSEC

DEVELOPER Parsec • **PUBLISHER** Parsec • **WEBSITE** www.parsec.org • **OUT** Early 2000



Parsec is going to be a huge multiplayer game based around a network of servers each responsible for a single galaxy, each with several solar systems. You can jump between galaxies using stargates, although these will only allow you into neighbouring galaxies. The game itself will be freeware, and developers Parsec are going to release versions for Mac and Linux as well as PC.

DESCENT 4

DEVELOPER Volition • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.volition-inc.com • **OUT** 2000

The *Descent* series has been around for years, and the games proved a popular alternative to other first-person shooters, largely because of their truly 3D gameplay. *Descent 4* looks like it'll ditch the little spaceships of earlier games, instead of going for humanoid characters. It'll also be set in the mines of earlier games, so expect plenty of disorientating "which way is up??" action.

STAR TREK : KLINGON ACADEMY

DEVELOPER Interplay • **PUBLISHER:** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.interplay.com • **OUT** Early 2000



A prequel to *Star Trek VI, Klingon Academy* has you learning to be a Klingon warrior in the Elite Command Academy of General Chang, played by Christopher Plummer. There's an all-new 3D graphics engine with nebulae, black holes and other hazards, and you get to command lots of different ships, in both multiplayer and solo campaign gameplay. And your head will look like a Cornish pastie (or is it a Mars bar?)

SILENT SPACE

DEVELOPER Crytek Studios • **PUBLISHER** TBC • **WEBSITE** www.crytek.com • **OUT** TBC

Another space sim, *Silent Space* has you playing the part of Stewart Chance, Space Force Academy graduate on a mission to prove his manhood battling the renegade Dakah. The *Silent Space* graphics engine promises new graphics technology that's claimed to make it run much faster than other space games.

FLASHPOINT

DEVELOPER Bohemia Interactive • **PUBLISHER** Ubi Soft• **WEBSITE** www.ubisoft.com• **OUT** TBC



Flashpoint is an all-round combat simulator that lets you control troops, tanks, helicopters and planes. Set in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, *Flashpoint* promises some pretty nice 3D graphics, decent flight models for the planes, and presumably decent walking and running models for the troops. Multiplayer is also on the cards, for some potentially very hectic action.

ELITE 4

DEVELOPER Frontier Developments • **PUBLISHER** Frontier Developments • **WEBSITE** www.frontier.co.uk • **OUT** Who knows?

This is the third sequel to what is regarded the original and best space sim. The original game featured a huge universe in which you started out with a crappy ship and no money, trading your way up to better things as you went.

No one's sure when *Elite 4* will be out, but if it makes a quarter of the impact of the original it'll be a real stay-up-all-night-until-your-eyes-bleed job.

DESTROYER COMMAND

DEVELOPER Ultimation • **PUBLISHER** SSI • **WEBSITE** www.ssionline.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



Destroyer Command puts you at the controls of that workhorse of the fleet, the destroyer. You'll be able to captain a single ship, firing guns and torpedoes, or command a squadron of ships, and the game will feature campaigns in the Pacific and Atlantic. Link-up is also promised with submarine sim *Silent Hunter II*.

JANE'S F/A-18

DEVELOPER Skunkworks • **PUBLISHER** EA • **WEBSITE** www.janes.ea.com • **OUT** TBC



From the creators of the classic *F-15, F/A-18* promises to be an ultra-realistic simulation of the US Navy's newest strike fighter. The game promises details like a flight deck that rocks as you taxi to launch, a completely authentic virtual cockpit full of clickable buttons, and too-scary-by-half carrier landings at the end of each mission.

BABYLON 5

DEVELOPER Yosemite Entertainment • **PUBLISHER** None as yet• **WEBSITE** www.yosemite-entertainment.com/ • **OUT** TBC

A space combat outing based on the telly fave, set mainly on the Starfury fighter, *Babylon 5* features real world physics with none of that impossible zipping about all over the shop. It also boasts the actual 3D models used for the ships in the series. The biggest problem, though, is that Sierra, who were going to release it, have dropped this title. Hopefully fan power will convince someone to market it.

BATTLECRUISER 3020 AD

DEVELOPER 3000AD • **PUBLISHER** TBC • **WEBSITE** www.bc300ad.com • **OUT** Mid-2000



When Take 2 released an unfinished *Battlecruiser* in 1996, it caused a storm that nearly threatened the development of the series. Now back under the control of the original team, the sequel, *3020AD*, is almost with us and looking very nice indeed. Boasting updated graphics (with support up to 1200x1600) and multiplayer support with up to 64 players online, this promises to be an extravagant release that should meet the high expectations surrounding it.

FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT 2

DEVELOPER Simis • **PUBLISHER** Simis • **WEBSITE** www.simis.co.uk • **OUT** Mid-2000

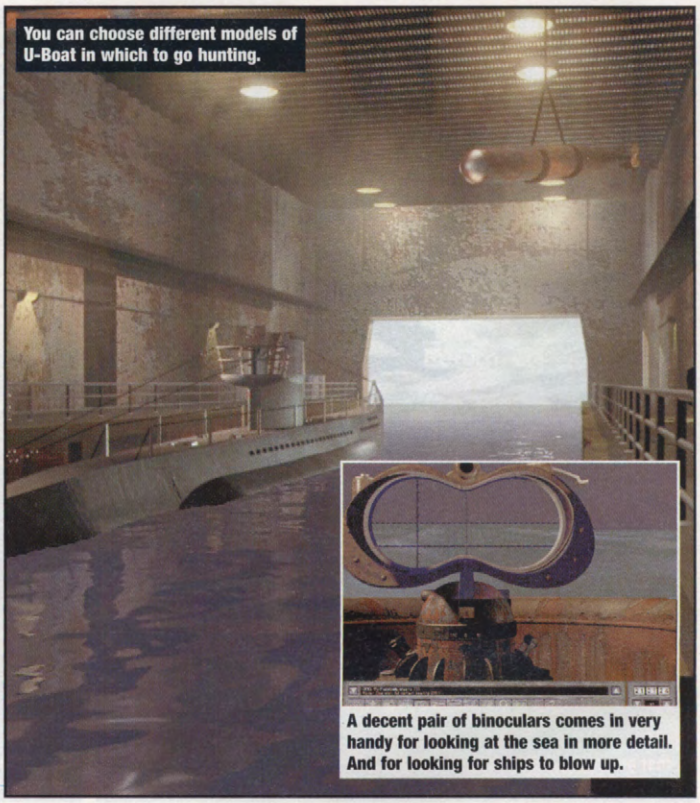
The original *FST* was a pretty revolutionary product that contained the tools needed to design your own terrain, planes and gameplay. *FST2* is a long-awaited sequel that utilises today's much more powerful hardware, with 3D-accelerated graphics and all that fancy stuff. There will be editors for things like terrain, 3D objects, cockpits and aerodynamics, and a complete library of pre-generated aircraft and ground objects.

SILENT HUNTER II

DEVELOPER: SSI • **PUBLISHER** Mindscape • **WEBSITE** www.mindscape.com • **OUT** Spring 2000

Compared to planes, submarines have been a bit neglected when it comes to sims. It's hardly surprising, really. Being stuck underwater for months at a time with nothing but a load of sweaty blokes and a collection of "gentlemen's entertainment journals" for company isn't exactly the stuff of boyhood dreams. Still, anyone who saw *Das Boot* will know that tense sneaking about trying not to get depth-charged is great material for a game.

Silent Hunter II, like its predecessor, is set in WWII. Unlike the first game, this one has you playing a U-Boat commander doing your best to wreck the convoys carrying supplies from the USA to Britain. As you may or may not know, submarines don't have windows, but this hasn't stopped SSI from using a very nice 3D graphics engine, with multiple camera views, as well as a suitably atmospheric view from the periscope. The usual single missions and campaigns are promised, as well as a very promising multiplayer link up with warship sim *Destroyer Command*.



You can choose different models of U-Boat in which to go hunting.

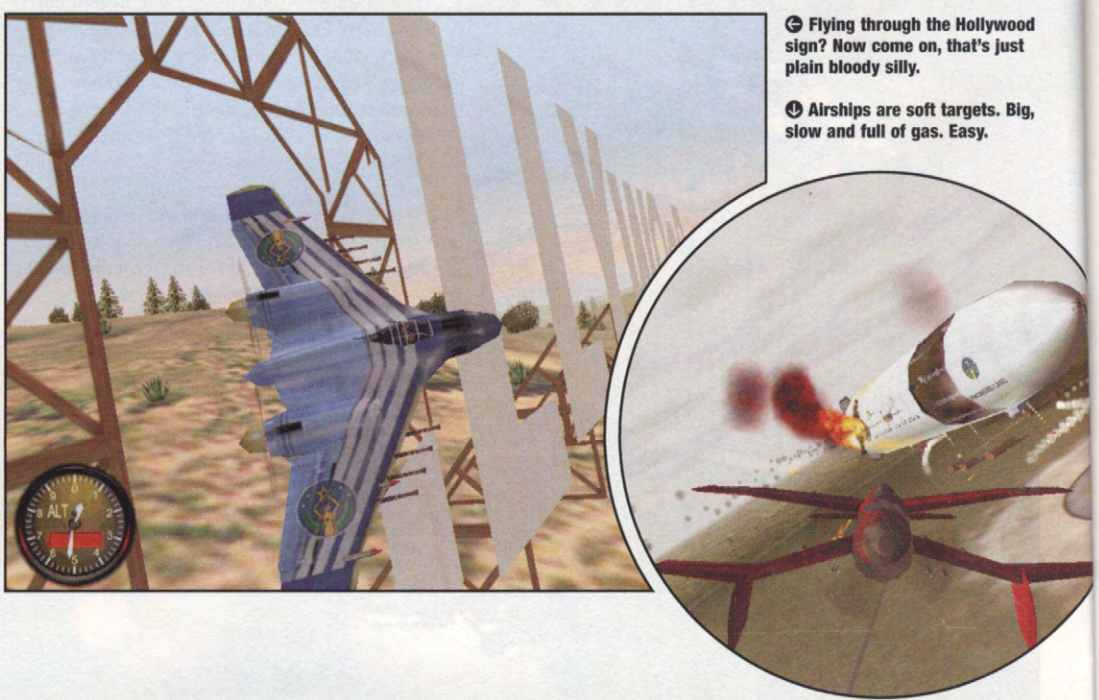
A decent pair of binoculars comes in very handy for looking at the sea in more detail. And for looking for ships to blow up.

CRIMSON SKIES

DEVELOPER Zipper Interactive • **PUBLISHER** Microsoft • **WEBSITE** www.crimsonskies.com • **OUT** Summer 2000

The problem with real history is that it can be quite dull, and everyone knows what happens. *Crimson Skies* is set in a wacky alternative-reality in 1930s America, which has fragmented into skirmishing nation states. Because the main roads and railway lines pass through these different nations, the only way to transport stuff is using giant airships – easy prey for airborne pirates, flying funny looking planes with lots of guns. Of course, the pirates don't have it all their own way, and each nation has its own aerial militias, with crack pilots.

Crimson Skies isn't due to be released until the Summer, and the details of mission and campaigns haven't been finalised yet. But if you're bored with all that reality stuff, the idea of flying a Grumman E-1c Avenger for the Nation of Hollywood could be a refreshing change from all those Mustangs and F-15s.

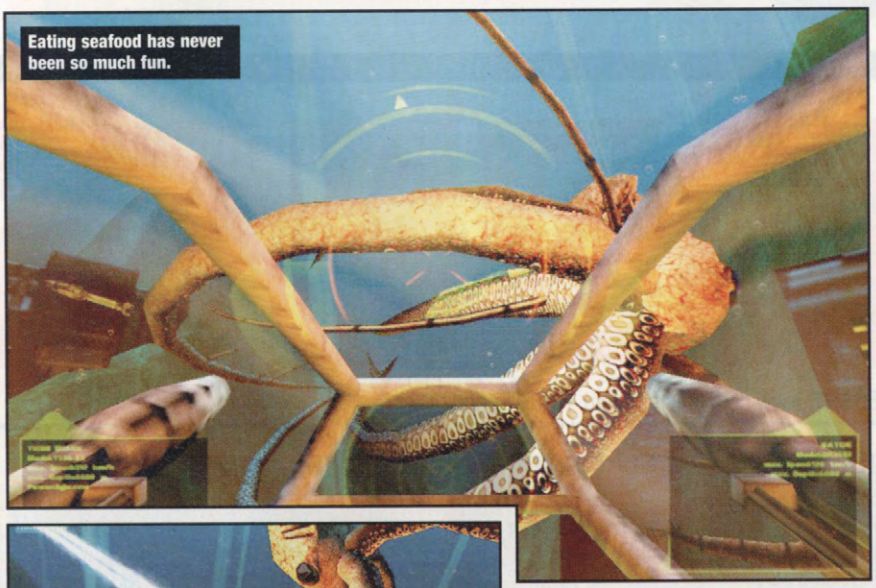


Flying through the Hollywood sign? Now come on, that's just plain bloody silly.

Airships are soft targets. Big, slow and full of gas. Easy.

AQUA

DEVELOPER Massive Development • **PUBLISHER** Massive Development • **WEBSITE** www.massive.de • **OUT** Autumn 2000



Eating seafood has never been so much fun.



Aqua features some big scary undersea monsters. And cool subs.

As the name suggests, this game either involves Scando "Barbie Girl" popsters or, more likely, the sea. *Aqua* is set in the future where a bunch of Anarchists have nicked a satellite that has done something strange to the ocean floor, releasing the Old Ones, big creatures intent on spoiling everything for us humans. As the mercenary Emerald 'Dead-Eye' Flint, you're the only one who can save humanity etc, etc.

Anyway, the plot doesn't really matter because Aqua has loads of missions and (judging by the screen grabs) some of the best, most original settings we've seen. Sod depth charges and British destroyers - the enemies of submariners in *Aqua* are giant squids, sharks and dirty great monsters – far more glamorous and scary opponents.

COMANCHE 4

DEVELOPER NovaLogic • **PUBLISHER** NovaLogic • **WEBSITE** www.novalogic.com • **OUT** Spring 2000



Helicopter in mid-air hover shock.

NovaLogic's *Comanche* series of chopper sims have always concentrated more on the arcade side of the genre, with nice graphics, meaty weapons and lots of varied missions, but have less realism when it comes to the flight models and on-board systems compared to some. *Comanche 4* seeks to combine the best of both worlds with completely revamped flight dynamics.

NovaLogic's Voxel Space 3D graphics engine, responsible for giving the earlier *Comanche* titles their impressive terrain graphics, has been enhanced as well, using 32-bit colour for smoother effects. As you'd expect from a completely new release, *Comanche 4* has brand new recon, ground attack and air-to-air missions, and up to 32-players will be able to compete online over NovaWorld, NovaLogic's Internet gaming service.

With the added realism, it looks as if the *Comanche* series may finally be taken seriously by the hardened sim crowd. But for the rest of us, decent playability will do.

DEEPSPACE

DEVELOPER Palestar Development • **PUBLISHER** TBC • **WEBSITE** www.palestar.com • **OUT** July 2000



Starting as an ensign piloting a small craft, the aim in *DeepSpace* is to work your way up to Grand Admiral. When you're there you'll be able to control a capital ship and plot tactical manoeuvres for one of the three warring factions in the game. *DeepSpace* uses a full 3D engine and promises hundreds of people playing online at the same time, with full stereo sound. Sounds like it could be a surprise hit.

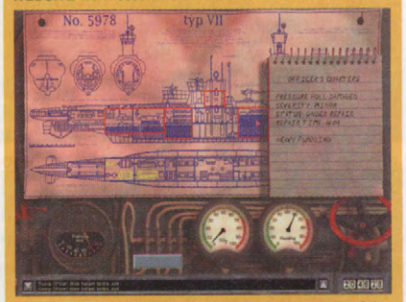
FREESPACE 3

DEVELOPER Volition • **PUBLISHER** Interplay • **WEBSITE** www.interplay.com • **OUT** End 2000

The *FreeSpace* series is a worthy contender for the space sim crown and Volition is hoping that *FreeSpace 3* will clinch it for them in the new millennium. Not much is known about *FreeSpace 3*, and there are no screenshots available as yet, but we do know it's going to sport a brand new engine, which should be enough to get you salivating by itself. Oh, and you can expect it to be fully mission-based as well.

SILENT HUNTER II

DEVELOPER SSI • **PUBLISHER** Mindscape • **WEBSITE** www.sssonline.com • **OUT** Mid-2000



If you've played *Silent Hunter* you can expect more of the same in the sequel – with bells and whistles. For a start the updated submarine epic is going to run in glorious 800x600 with 32-bit art and full 3D external views. It's also moved locations from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Don't expect multiplayer support because the nature of the game means it doesn't make sense – these submarines don't hunt in packs.

UFS VANGUARD

DEVELOPER Red Storm • **PUBLISHER** TBC • **WEBSITE** www.redstorm.com • **OUT** August 2000

A slightly different approach to the traditional space sim is being promised by UFS Vanguard. Instead of actually piloting a ship in combat you play the role of captain, which means a more strategic approach to the turn and shoot genre. With any luck a mission editor and multiplayer support will be included in time for the game's release.

FLY! II

DEVELOPER Terminal Reality • **PUBLISHER** Take 2 Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.terminalreality.com/ • **OUT** Late 2000

Sequel to the civilian flight sim *Fly!*, this new version promises more realism for people who can't afford flying lessons. *Fly! II* will have much improved cockpits and avionics, as well as better help for beginners and a far more sophisticated graphics engine together with true satellite terrain imagery. If only you'd watch the flight attendants as they take you through the safety procedure.

SPORTS

PRINCE NAS

DEVELOPER Codemasters • PUBLISHER Codemasters • WEBSITE www.codemasters.com • OUT Spring 2000

Forget *Dreamcast* and *N64*, the PC is about to have its biggest fight yet. *Keith Pullin* trades blows with a 'Prince'

Before Prince Naseem Hamed graced the blood-splattered ring of modern pugilism the sport was in a bad way. In fact, boxing had deteriorated into farce. Overweight middle-aged men attempted to relive former glories, and those who could flex muscle instead of flab ended up in jail. Actually, things haven't improved much. Mike Tyson continues to get an earful, while other fighters cry like babies at the mere thought of a scrap. Just what is the sport coming to?

Redemption comes in the form of 25-year-old WBO featherweight champion, 'Prince' Naseem Hamed. Young, cocky, immensely talented and extremely marketable, you could say he's the ideal man to give PC boxing games the injection of excitement, innovation and credibility they have so far lacked. There has literally never been a decent boxing game for the PC. So, hopefully, the 'Prince' is about to do for PC games what he did for boxing.

LIVE THE DREAM

Prince Naseem Boxing is being developed in-house at Codemasters, and boasts a unique skeletal animation technique that should translate into the most authentic boxing experience we've ever seen on the PC. There's even the obligatory pointless rope-somersaulting razzmatazz at the start of each bout. Thankfully, unlike in real life, you can skip all that, and get straight into the action.

Sixteen internationally renowned boxers (at featherweight?) twist convincingly from side to side as they absorb lefts, rights, uppercuts, hooks and more. Noses break and gumshields spin through the air. There's sweat, grunts, groans and the witless banter of corner men. Each fighter has a specific style that affects attributes such as recovery rates and stamina. Nothing, absolutely nothing has been left out.

Of course, that's just the heat of the battle. There's a lot more to this boxing extravaganza than punching one ugly mug after another. The training mode takes place in Hamed's personal gymnasium and allows you to develop boxers in the way you want. The whole process is overseen by a digital Naz who teaches the basic arts of dodging, blocking, movement and punching.

Alternatively, the 'World' game offers the more thoughtful and tactical boxing enthusiast the chance to take their protégé to the very top. In this career mode you will be able to duke it out against 90 other aspiring hopefuls. Indeed, Codemasters claim this will be a Tamagotchi-style affair where you are encouraged to treat your fledgling bruiser in the right way in order to get results.

> **"You could say he's the ideal man to give PC boxing games the injection of excitement, innovation and credibility they have so far lacked"**

It's dilemma central. You can train the guy into the ground, so he's strong and quick, but physically shattered when it comes to actually fighting. Or, on the other hand, you can make the training regime more lenient so he's fresh and "well up for it" as Sheffield's beloved son might say. Then there's his diet. Do you stuff your prize fighter full of burgers à la Riddick Bowe? Or hire a nutritionist and fuel his anger with a diet of broccoli and oats?

Ultimately, with the right mixture of dedication and skill, you will rise up from £100-a-night appearances in the dingy clubs of London's East end, to the dizzying bank-busting heights of Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. In total there are 16 arenas, each with their own recognisable characteristics.

If tactical decision making is too much for your punch drunk brain, the 'Showcase' mode is probably more your kind of thing. The third and final mode in the game allows up to eight human players to participate in a round robin tournament against the same number of computer opponents. Each of the human players has a stab at a swarthy computer fighter and then points are totalled up and a winner pronounced. Apparently, there are other aspects to this mode, but the developers have yet to finalise exactly what those details are.

BOXING CLEVER

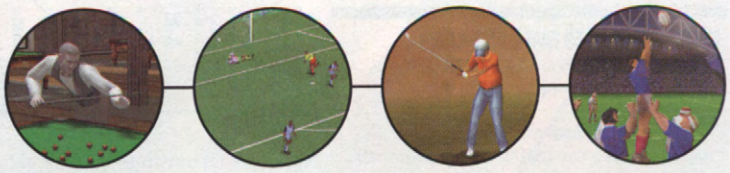
Naseem himself is an avid games player, and is involved in the project on a more than cursory basis. The advice he's provided has been taken very seriously, indeed. Let's face it, if anyone knows how to duck, dive, weave and punch, it's him. He's also a bit of a stickler when it comes to style and presentation and so has insisted that other aspects of the game are taken just as seriously.

The active ringside audience cheer and leap around like lunatics when the action is hot, and groan sullenly when the proceedings are not so exciting. The replays, too, in true EA Sports fashion are completely controllable and presumably saveable.

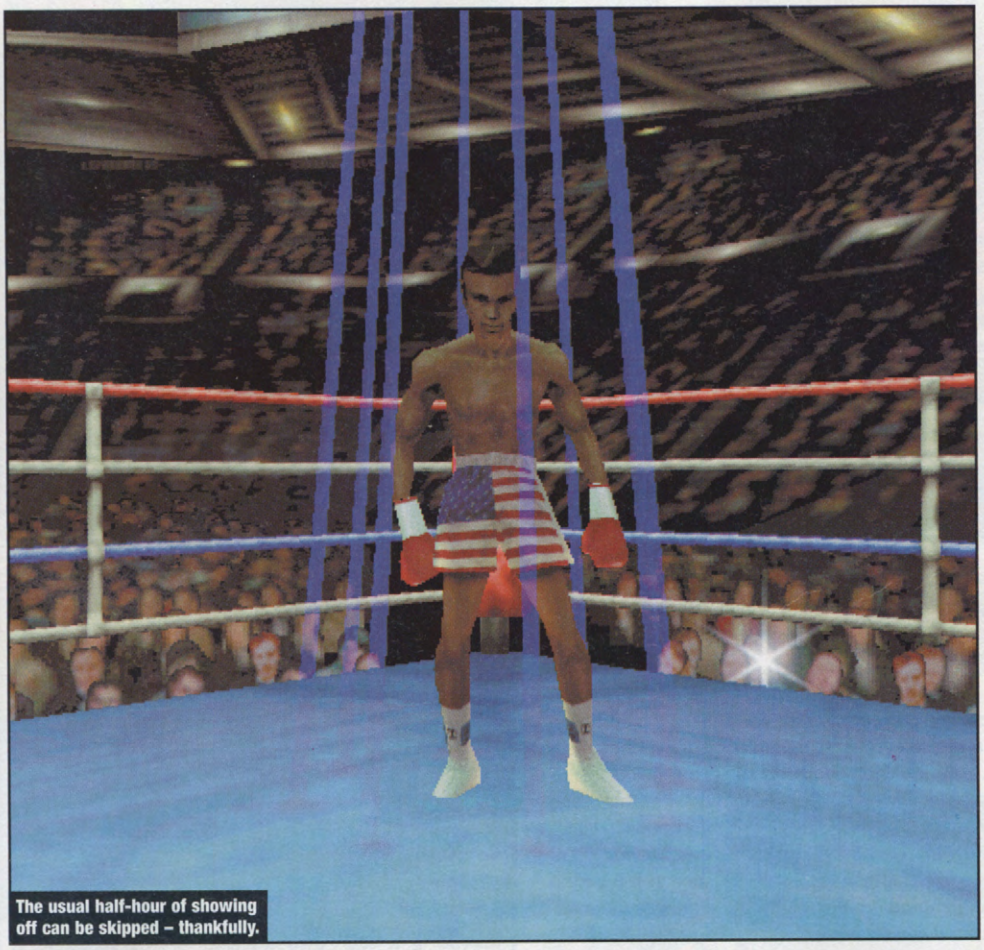
So there you have it. If *Prince Naseem Boxing* is not one of the hottest sports game of 2000, we will personally go up to Sheffield and ask the 'Prince' where it all went wrong. Well, our editor will anyway...



Naz lands one on Mr T's nose as the crowd strain to get a better look.



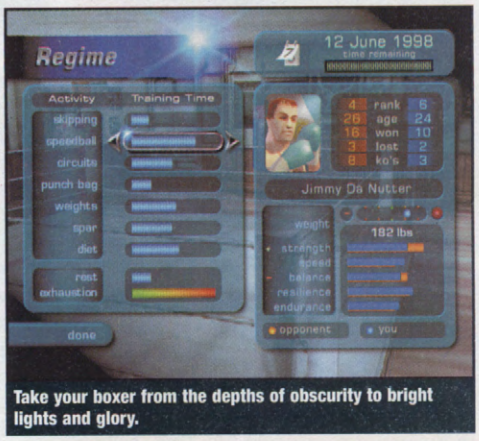
EEM BOXING



The usual half-hour of showing off can be skipped – thankfully.



Is this the mismatch of the century, or has Mr T lost a little weight?



Take your boxer from the depths of obscurity to bright lights and glory.

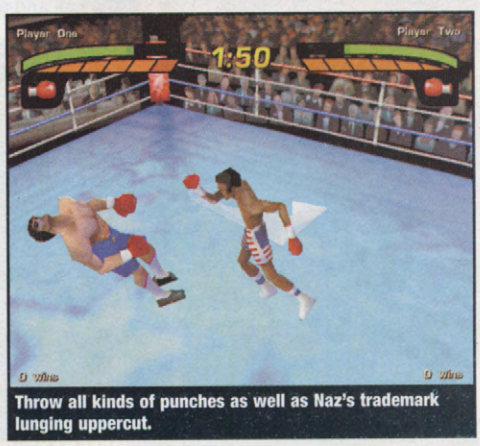
HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Prince Naseem fights to the death

Prince Naseem Hamed is rapidly becoming one of the most successful boxers of all time. At present his record reads 33 fights, 33 wins and 29 knockouts. Amazingly, he is still only 25 years old, which, judging by current trends, means he's still got another 25 years left in him. Ultimately, he'll probably fight his own son. Now that would be seriously cool.



No one escapes the wrath of the little man from Sheffield.



Throw all kinds of punches as well as Naz's trademark lunging uppercut.

ULTIMATE SOCCER MANAGER 2000

DEVELOPER Impressions UK • **PUBLISHER** Havas Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.sierra-online.co.uk • **OUT** April 2000

The only football management game that lets you offer bungs and accept bribes, *USM* has been updated to sport a new 3D match engine, so you can live through every moment of your cup final glory. Impressions claim that, with a database of more than 13,000 players and 500 teams from across the world, it's going to be a success.

GIANT KILLERS

DEVELOPER Smoking Gun Productions • **PUBLISHER** On-Line Publishing • **WEBSITE** www.on-line.co.uk/fpage.shtml • **OUT** February 2000



Forget about being a chairman, finances and foreign leagues. *Giant Killers* is a new football management game that's only bothered about events on the pitch – and in this country. Choose any team you want, the squad and tactics. It might not have the beating of *CM 99/00*, but it's worth watching.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4

DEVELOPER Sports Interactive • **PUBLISHER** Eidos • **WEBSITE** www.eidos.com • **OUT** September 2000

No news on the next release of the classic football management game, but you know it's going to be released around the start of the next football season. All the up-to-date stats from every league that counts, including the lads that play down your park on Sundays, huge sales figures and adoration from the fans. Don't expect a massive new 3D engine because that isn't the name of *CM*'s game.

CRICKET 2000

DEVELOPER EA Sports • **PUBLISHER** Electronic Arts • **WEBSITE** www.easports.com • **OUT** TBC



The England team is currently plumbing new depths in test cricket, but EA's new release will give you the chance to right all the wrongs. New features include improved real-life bat and ball physics, night-time play and up-to-date player ratings and statistics.

TIGER WOODS 2000 PGA TOUR GOLF PRO

DEVELOPER EA Sports • **PUBLISHER** Electronic Arts • **WEBSITE** www.easports.com • **OUT** February 2000



Golf games are very popular on the PC, and with wonder-kid Tiger Woods as the name behind its latest simulation, EA has got to be on to a winner. The graphics look stunning and EA are promising real-time swing synchronisation and in-depth Internet play.

TOTAL SOCCER 2000

DEVELOPER Iridion Interactive • **PUBLISHER** Iridion Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.iridion.com • **OUT** January 2000

EA reigns over the world of 3D footie games, but when it comes down to playability many people still hang on to their memories of the classic *Sensible World Of Soccer*. It's those people that *Total Soccer 2000* aims to please with its own brand of Subutteo graphics and irresistible gameplay.

OLYMPICS: SYDNEY 2000

DEVELOPER Eidos • **PUBLISHER** Eidos • **WEBSITE** www.eidos.com • **OUT** Just before the Olympics

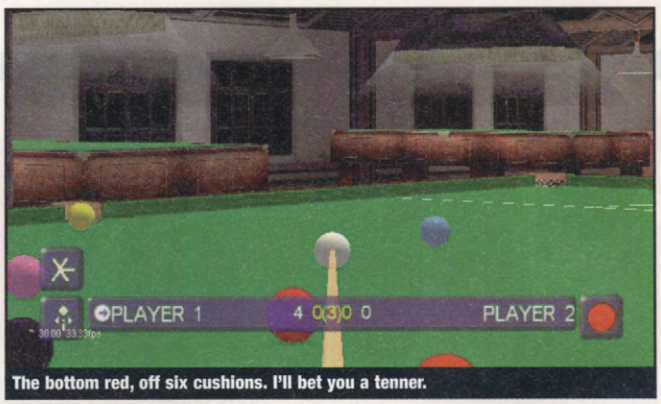
Track And Field has worn out more keyboards and joysticks than any other game and Eidos is hoping its latest tie-in will be remembered just as fondly. Expect to see conversions of all the major sports, except synchronised swimming.

CODEMASTERS SNOOKER

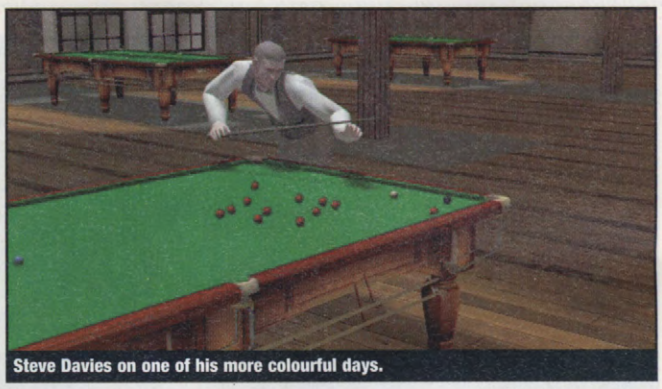
DEVELOPER Codemasters • **PUBLISHER** Codemasters • **WEBSITE** www.codemasters.co.uk • **OUT** Spring 2000

There is only one snooker game worth having at the moment, and that's *Jimmy White's 2 Cueball*, but that is going to change very soon with the arrival of *Codemasters Snooker*, developed by Manchester-based Blade Interactive Studios. The main attraction is that it's endorsed by Cuemasters, the management company of the top snooker stars, which means the game has the exclusive rights to using all the big names, such as Stephen Hendry, Ken Doherty and Jim Davidson, as well as featuring the famous Crucible venue.

The players have been motion captured to ensure instant recognition and classy graphics, which will make a nice change from the disembodied hands or blocky bikers we've been presented with in other potting titles. We're promised the most accurate physics ever and, more interestingly, an AI capable of mimicking the psychological traits of your opponents, such as aggressive potting, pressure shots and conservative play. For that real professional feel, a new cueing system is being implemented to allow you to set yourself up for the next shot. After three, 'Snooker loopy nuts are we...'



The bottom red, off six cushions. I'll bet you a tenner.



Steve Davies on one of his more colourful days.

UEFA MANAGER 2000

DEVELOPER Bubball Systems • **PUBLISHER** Infogrames • **WEBSITE** www.infogrames.co.uk • **OUT** May 2000 •

We've said it a hundred times before and we'll say it again: in footballing management terms, there is only *Championship Manager*. Now *UEFA Manager 2000* is aiming to become the best, competing with the likes of *Premier Manager 99* and *Ultimate Soccer Manager*. It has the official UEFA licence to start with, all the top European leagues and a comprehensive simulation of the Champions League. Your job will be to cover the usual spectrums of tactics, sponsorships and media relations that PC managers are expected to undertake. There's also the option to view a 90-minute match through the impressive 3D engine and to tackle some challenging scenarios, such as relegation battles and ground developments. But its success depends on whether it can recreate the same feeling of depth and personal involvement that life-sucking games have.



Coventry '0', Watford '0'? Are they taking the p*.**



Just like digital TV, except you can't turn over to Jerry Springer.



Do we really need all of this? Just get the ball in the net, OK?

AT 10 MPH IT'S A PIECE OF GRAVEL
AT 180 MPH IT'S A PIECE OF SHRAPNEL

IN FORMULA 1
DEBRIS ON THE TRACK IS ONE
OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF
CONTROL LOSS...

A DETAIL NOT LOST IN ...

F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX

DRIVEN BY DETAIL









PlayStation

PC CD

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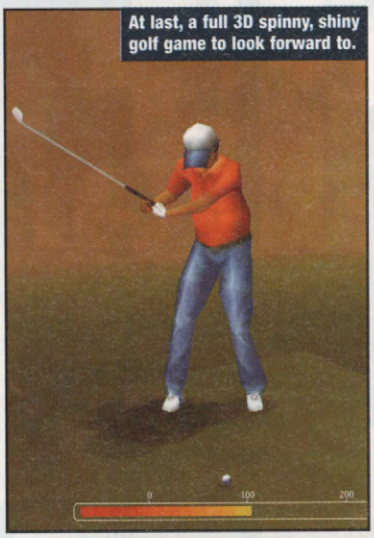
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ULTIMATE GOLF

DEVELOPER Vertex Multimedia • **PUBLISHER** Ubi Soft • **WEBSITE** www.ubisoft.co.uk • **OUT** April 2000



The women's champ takes her first shot from the 'lady's tee'.



At last, a full 3D spinny, shiny golf game to look forward to.

It's not often that we get excited about a golf game, but *Ultimate Golf* has thrown us into a clubbing frenzy. Promising unparalleled levels of movement freedom and a sophisticated 3D engine, *UG* lets you walk around the hole in first-person and squat in that shameless way that golfers do. Although we've yet to find out whether you can turn around and shoot your caddy in the face.

Other things to get you hot under the polo shirt are the extremely realistic weather effects (more than just the variable wind blowing your ball this way or that) and, for the really anal golfer, the option to design your very own golf club.

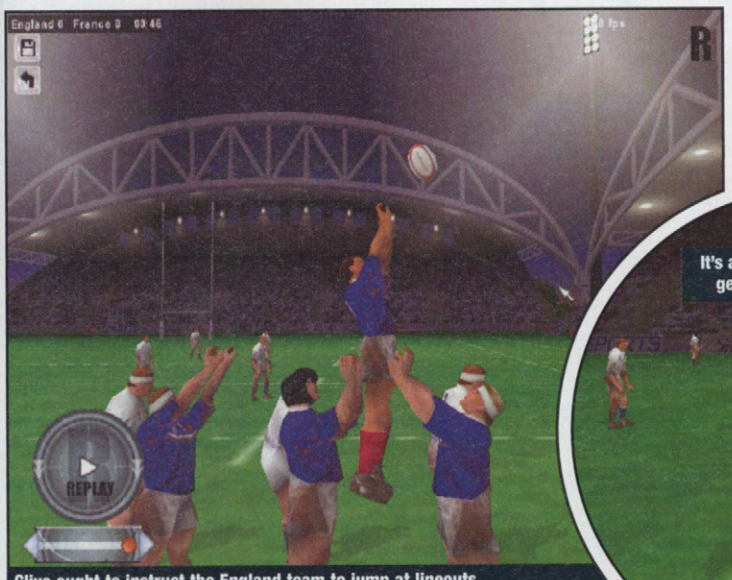
Sadly, a feature common to all other golf games won't be included. No more will you be able to pop out and do some shopping or make a cup of coffee every time the game has to redraw the background as it all happens in wonderfully lush real time, like in any good 3D game. A real corker.

RUGBY 2000

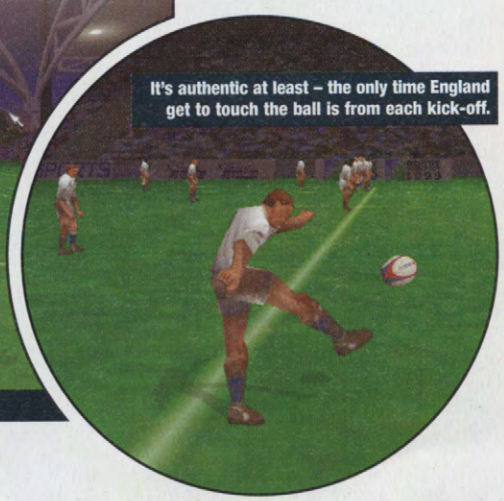
DEVELOPER EA Sports • **PUBLISHER** Electronic Arts • **WEBSITE** www.easports.com • **OUT** March

Despite the recent World Cup, rugby hasn't succeeded in capturing the imagination of our nation. Partly because the teams are made up of street brawlers that make Mike Tyson look like David Gower, and partly because there's never been a successful PC conversion to get the kids hooked from an early age. EA Sports can't do anything about the former but it's hoping that its forthcoming *Rugby 2000* game will persuade children that playing with odd-shaped balls is the future.

All the usual EA Sports panache should help proceedings, with play-by-play commentary by the 'voice of rugby' Bill McLaren, state-of-the-art player inertia and motion capture, and authentic team management and gameplay strategies from the England World Cup coach, Clive Woodward. If you're a fan, you'll be pleased to hear that the game is also going to feature all the stats, stadia and players from the top 20 teams in the real world. So we assume that England won't be taking a starring role, then?



Clive ought to instruct the England team to jump at lineouts.



It's authentic at least – the only time England get to touch the ball is from each kick-off.

EURO LEAGUE FOOTBALL

DEVELOPER Dinamic • **PUBLISHER** Virgin Interactive
Website: www.vie.co.uk • **OUT** February 2000

Premier Manager has been the one game that has challenged *Championship Manager* for the footie management crown. This latest incarnation could set a new standard. It mixes arcade action and management into one box, something not seen since the *Sensible World Of Soccer*.

FOOTBALL WORLD MANAGER 2000

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft • **PUBLISHER** Ubi Soft • **WEBSITE** www.ubisoft.co.uk • **OUT** January 2000



After the success of *Championship Manager*, the whole world is looking to cash in on the success. The latest company to announce an update is Ubi Soft – so what's this one got that the others haven't? Speed, if the developers are to be believed, the one thing *CM 99/00* falls over on. It's promising as much detail in a fraction of the time – and, if it can deliver, then it might just challenge for the crown.

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2000

DEVELOPER Empire Sports • **PUBLISHER** Empire Interactive • **WEBSITE** www.empire.co.uk • **OUT** Mid-2000

A surprise hit from last year, the updated *International Cricket Captain 2000* will enable cricket fans to play each other online. Players will be able to build up a team, save it and see how it stacks up against other teams on the ladder. Among the many other new features are mid-season transfers and the option to switch countries during the game.

PLAYER MANAGER 2000

DEVELOPER Anco • **PUBLISHER** Anco • **WEBSITE** www.anco.co.uk • **OUT** Early 2000



Alongside its online version, Anco is also releasing an update to its single-player football management title. New features include new text commentary, new in-game assistance from your coach and a distribution/possession bar that lets you see instantly how your team is faring against the opposition. The 3D engine also features new player models and supports hardware acceleration.

PLAYER MANAGER ONLINE

DEVELOPER Anco • **PUBLISHER** Anco • **WEBSITE** www.anco.co.uk • **OUT** TBC

What's missing from *Championship Manager*? The lack of real humans, which makes your treble victory sound a mite hollow. Anco is going to change this with the release of the first online management game. They're keeping most of the features from its core release, including the 3D engine, and hoping that managers will interact to make transfers and taunts via emails. Now that could be interesting.

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 3

DEVELOPER Awesome Developments • **PUBLISHER** Virgin • **WEBSITE** www.vie.co.uk • **OUT** TBC

Archer Maclean is hard at work coding the next instalment of his ever-popular and highly realistic snooker game. As well as the most realistic ball physics going, you can expect to see a lot more made of the sub-games that padded out *Cueball 2*. There's no release date as yet, but we'll keep you bang up-to-date with any developments.

FLINTSTONES BOWLING GAME

DEVELOPER SouthPeak Interactive • **PUBLISHER** SouthPeak • **WEBSITE** www.southpeak.com • **OUT** TBC

You might not have been holding your breath waiting for the *Flintstones Bowling* tie-in, but SouthPeak can't stop enthusing about its 'huge' sports title. "Gamers will welcome a night of bowling in their bare feet with granite bowling balls and pins chiselled from stone," claimed SouthPeak's president, Armistead Sapp. He really ought to get out more.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

DATA FILE

2007

BUG-FIX PATCH WINS FULL-PRICE RELEASE

"We're no charity," insist publishers

September 3rd, 2007: Inchoate Technologies, publishers of popular high-school shoot 'em up *Trenchcoat Justice*, today announced the release of a full-price patch disk for the game. Available from high street retailers at a cost of £69.99, the patch corrects a multitude of errors that dogged the original program, including targeting and control issues, 2,000 individual sound faults, and a DirectX 11.6 compatibility problem which caused monitors to glow, throb, and explode – leaving thousands of players blinded by flying shards of glass.

"We simply can't afford to mail patch disks to the millions of people who bought *Trenchcoat Justice*, especially when you consider the number of potential customers we've lost through this mass blinding glitch," Inchoate CEO Sean Klipart announced at yesterday's press conference.

"We're anticipating our projected sales figures for the forthcoming sequel, *Trenchcoat II*, to fall wide of the mark – half the gaming audience



APE OF TO

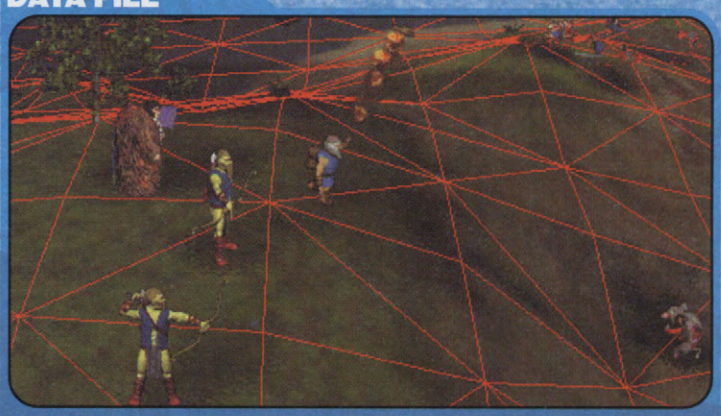
Predicting the future of gaming is like trying to fit a live horse in your mouth – it simply can't be done. Who could have forseen the leisure time progress curve which lead from the wooden cup-and-ball of the seventeenth century to the VR ultraviolence of now? Answer: no-one. But here at *ZONE* towers, we're ambitious. Insanely ambitious. Which is why we present the following: our projected expectations for the games of tomorrow. If the future pans out the way we expect it to, these are the headlines you'll be reading in the pages of *PC ZONE* throughout the coming millennium...

MYSTIC MEG Mr Charlie Brooker

"Our body re-mapping technology isn't working perfectly yet – the genitals of the original tramps are still visible, which is disturbing when you're dealing with, for example, a very large Smurf"

LUCINDA GRAPE, PASOTECH LS

DATA FILE



2018

POLYGON COUNT "BEYOND CALCULATION"

"It's probably some ludicrous, out-there number," admits baffled programmer

January 19th, 2018: Renowned games developer ClicketyClick today confirmed it had lost all hope of counting the number of polygons appearing on screen in forthcoming release *Dunston MD*. The game, which casts the player as a bogus male doctor attempting to evade detection in a hospital for the elderly, uses intricately detailed three-dimensional graphics for all its character models – but no-one can say for sure just how much detail will be on display.

"The number of polygons appears to be so huge, there's simply no way of calculating it," admits lead programmer Andy Beckham. "We tried to run a count, but our systems went crazy – they kept filling the screen with the words "Does Not Compute" and beeping like hell. It's quite an embarrassment to be honest."

The problem came to light when Marianne Skurk, ClicketyClick's head of PR, asked Beckham for data that could help pad out an official company press release.

"I like to provide information like polygon counts and so on for games journalists, if you can call those chimps journalists," Skurk recalls.

"Usually the technical guys downstairs supply this sort of gibberish at the drop of a hat, but this time they were stumped."

"It's a bit like trying to measure the Universe," says Beckham. "It's there, and you can see it, but there's such an infinite amount of detail involved, it dents your mind just thinking about it."

The company hopes players will disregard the uncertainty surrounding the exact figures.

"All we know is the onscreen characters are seamlessly smooth and pliable," boasts Skurk.

"They look just like the real thing. No rough edges at all. We're confident gamers will be too busy gasping to worry about polygons. The scenes in the proctology stage in particular are simply eye-watering."

won't be able to see their screens any more. We've got to make up the lost revenue somehow, and charging a huge fee for this patch is the only logical solution."

Klipart went on to express sympathy for the thousands who have permanently lost their vision as a result of playing his company's game.

"My heart goes out to them," he stammered in a voice thick with emotion.

"They're going to miss out on so much – *Trenchcoat II* has awesome new lighting effects and a mind-blowing polygon count. It looks a hundred times better than the first game. It's just an incredible product and it chokes me up to think of all the poor blind people out there who'll never experience or buy it. It's a tragedy."

Klipart then left the press conference via a previously concealed back-mounted 'copter pack, intermittently firing a handgun into the angry mob of sightless protesters gathering below.

DATA FILE

2034

SEXUAL ACTIVITY SIMULATOR "BETTER THAN SEX"

"I haven't left the house for three weeks," claims feverish teen

February 28th, 2034: Computer games retailers worldwide have been unable to cope with demand for Reprobate Software's *Full Sexual Intercourse 2.0*. The sexual activity simulator went on sale three weeks ago and, as word of mouth spreads, more and more shops are seeing stocks dwindle rapidly.

Retail manager Frank Bouchamp says it's his most popular item ever.

"People are going crazy, saying it's better than the real thing," he laughs.

"I've had guys clawing at the doors before opening time, grinding their crotches against the glass," he adds.

"I've never had 'proper' sex, and now I don't want to any more," enthuses teenage customer Gareth Yambone, visiting the store to pick up a 'rumble-pack' device compatible with the game's custom-made, multi-orificed peripheral.



"*Full Sexual Intercourse 2.0* is all I need. I've been banging this damn thing non-stop all week. It's incredibly addictive. Some days I don't even bother getting dressed – I just stay in my room chasing that high score."

SCALE OF LOVE-MAKING COULD DAMAGE INDUSTRY

Full Sexual Intercourse 2.0 simulates full sexual intercourse with the partner or multiple partners of the player's choosing. Users interact with the program via an ergonomic peripheral which caters for all known sexes, orientations and fetishes.

The hit software has been blamed for the unprecedented 64-fold increase in workplace absenteeism recorded over the last three weeks. Millions of workers are believed to be feigning illness – and in extreme cases, death – in order to spend more time at home. Demand for eunuch staff to replace missing employees is rising, as financial experts warn of a crisis brought on by the explosion of interest in orgiastic excess.

Yet despite the controversy, the creators of *Full Sexual intercourse 2.0* are unrepentant.

"We're already hard at work on a bunch of sequels," reveals head designer Jake Lemonpip.

"The portable handheld version comes next, in time for Christmas. Looking beyond that, *Full Sex 3.0* will have an online multiplayer facility that's going to change the world. Every single person on this planet will have the option of taking part in an immense, simultaneous, billion-header orgy of limitless sexual abandon with everybody else."

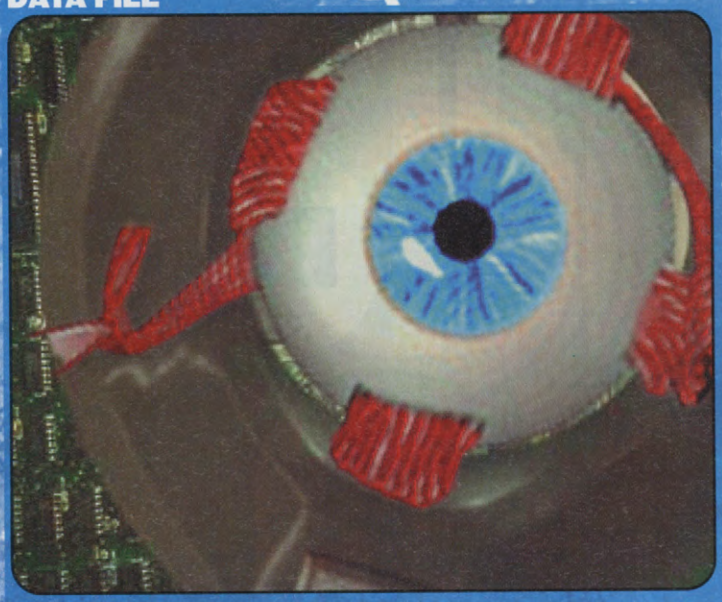
Full Sexual Intercourse 2.0 is the company's third title. The first was an obscure 1985 Sinclair ZX Spectrum release entitled *Sex Olympics*, in which players caused a pair of poorly-drawn lovers to copulate onscreen via frenzied manipulation of a Kempston joystick. The game's ultimate aim remained unclear, but it became a minor underground hit popular with adolescents and backward farmhands.

Following the modest success of *Sex Olympics*, the company withdrew from the public eye, taking a 39-year hiatus before releasing last year's *Full Sexual Intercourse 1.0*. It was a financial disaster that almost left them bankrupt.

"We should have updated the graphics," sighs Lemonpip.

"It forced us back to the drawing board, and the result was *Full Sex 2.0*. It's been a difficult journey, but we seem to have got it right at last."

DATA FILE



2055

NEW 'SUPER EYEBALL' TURNS BEGGARS INTO CARTOON FUNSTERS

3D-Accelerated In-socket vision system blasted by bleeding heart liberals

January 8th, 2055: PasoTech, manufacturers of the best-selling EyeScore digital eyeball, today announced a substantially more advanced successor. The EyeScore II will feature volumetric lighting, texture compression and bump mapping, and will be able to support a resolution of 39 trillion by 39 trillion pixels at a frame rate of 5 billion frames per second.

"This is going to change the way we see the world forever," claimed company spokesman Lucinda Grape.

"With the EyeScore II in place of the primitive eyeballs they were born with, our customers will find themselves living in a brighter, more exciting world, in which every surface shines with incredible clarity, every lightbulb and candle flame glimmers with the beauty of a finely cut diamond, and every human being they encounter is free from blackheads and dental imperfections. In short, they will find themselves living in a visual paradise."

Users of the original EyeScore system would be entitled to an upgrade in exchange for a reduced fee, she added, although there could be a wait of several weeks before the replacement eyeballs arrive.

NOUVEAU-RICHE RECLAIM THE STREETS

Yet the system has already come under fire from charities who claim the EyeScore II's unique Social Blemish Removal System is cruel and unfair. Users of the hi-tech eyeballs can adjust a special filter to remove all visible trace of the homeless – by transforming their shabby, drunken forms with those of popular cartoon characters.

"This body re-mapping technology is the most complex of its kind," Grape boasts. Yet she admits there are problems.

"It's not working perfectly yet – there are some glitches that we definitely need to address. The beer cans and genitals of the original tramps are still visible, which is very disturbing when you're dealing with, for example, a very large Smurf."

It isn't only the homeless who vanish. The Social Blemish Removal System can be adjusted to remove anyone with unfashionable clothing, unkempt hair, or less money than the viewer.

The Royal Family have reportedly ordered a great big truck full of them, which they'll probably wear while they're arsing about on the back of horses murdering foxes and that with their posh sodding friends, the great big toffee-nosed ponces.



DATA FILE

2059

FERAL PRIMATES "DEVELOPING OWN LEISURE SOFTWARE"

Industrious chimpanzees create rudimentary *Pac-Man* clone

June 15th, 2059: African apes and monkeys are developing their own games software, a team of experts claimed yesterday. The announcement sent shockwaves through both the natural history and technology communities, whose conventional wisdom has it that jungle-dwelling primates, while intelligent enough to fashion basic tools from sticks and rocks, lack the skills to produce adrenaline-pumping arcade action computer games of their own.

"We went in to observe a community of apes in their natural habitat, and what we discovered left us astounded," announced Didcot University Primate Research Unit head Professor Danielle Chambers at a packed press conference yesterday.

"Obviously, the games they're working on at the moment are light years behind the sort of stuff we take for granted, but they're still way beyond what we thought they were capable of."

Professor Chambers described how she and her colleagues watched in amazement as a group of young male chimpanzees spent several months perfecting a working upright arcade cabinet version of *Pac-Man*. Once the game was complete, the same group of chimps immediately set to work introducing a monetary system to their community, in order to generate coins to operate the machine with.

"Within three weeks they'd gone on to invent the chip shop – they installed the *Pac-Man* cabinet in the corner, and used the earnings from that to begin work on *Kung Fu Master*," said Chambers.

Although it is not yet clear whether other groups of primates have developed comparable programming skills, software giants Microsoft have reportedly despatched a team of hunters to the African jungle with instructions to round up a minimum of 200 chimpanzees and set them to work in a makeshift office as quickly as possible.

DATA FILE

2062

SINGLE-PLAYER GAME RELEASED

Arcade action title will entertain players on solo basis

May 3rd, 2062: The games industry was rocked today by the release of *Magic Rabbit Banjo Boy* – a cunicular musician simulator from Brighton developers Pier 9. But for once the subject matter is not the issue – experts are astounded that the game only caters for single players. No online multiplayer option is provided – a clear breach of EU State gaming guidelines.

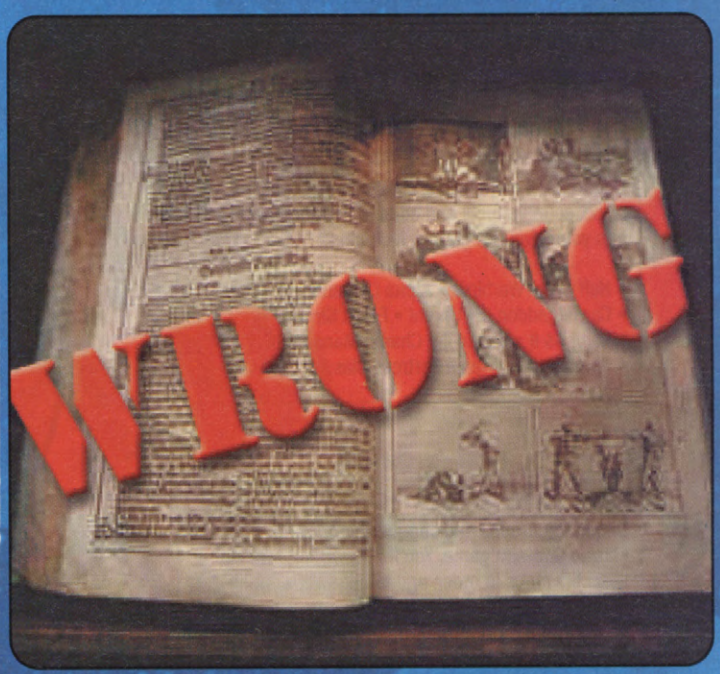
DATA FILE

2087

GAMES UNDER FIRE AS 'BOOK READING' CRAZE GRIPS NATION'S TEENS

***Charles Dickens' Page-Turning Challenge* "turns kids into helpless swots"**

October 31st, 2087: Book abuse has soared among the under-twenties, claims a report published today. The findings represent a massive blow to the government, which in January vowed to eliminate all traces of



books, magazines, and other reading matter from the nation's schools by the end of this year.

Of the 10,000 teenagers interviewed for the survey, 34% admitted reading a short story within the last fortnight, while an astonishing 83% confessed to having read an entire book from cover to cover at some point in their lives.

Book or magazine use can cause uncontrollable squinting in the young, as their eyes, reared on the soothing glow of organic monitor displays, struggle to focus on the tiny characters marked on a standard printed page. Furthermore, many book pushers 'cut' their wares with low-quality paper in order to save money. Ink can leave the page, smearing fingers and clothing with dirty residue, while in extreme cases paper-cuts can nick the user's finger, drawing blood.

The shock rise in book abuse is blamed on a pair of controversial computer games from Scottish developer MAD. The two games – *Charles Dickens' Page-Turning Challenge* and *Librarian!* – both openly depict the reading of books, magazines, and even densely-written political pamphlets of the Seventeenth Century. Players are encouraged to read words for points, while those skilful enough to form complete sentences in their mind's eye are rewarded with a 'literacy bonus', multiplied each time they begin a new chapter.

"We're just giving people a safe, virtual environment in which they can try out things that would be illegal in the real world," said a spokesman for the software house.

"To suggest that kids are going to play our game, and then walk away, pick up a book and start reading is just absurd. It's a piece of computerised fantasy – that's all."

Some politicians don't agree – a motion calling for the company to be held responsible for corrupting the young will be heard in the House of Commons this afternoon, between Prime Minister's Firefight Time and the ceremonial round of Soggy Biscuit.

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Championship Manager 3


Civilization II: Test Of Time


Dungeon Keeper II


Final Fantasy VII


Half-Life

THE PCZONE GAME OF THE

Want to know what the pinnacle of gaming excellence is at this moment in time? Then you've come to the right place. The entire *PC ZONE* team sit court in an attempt to choose The Game of the Millennium. Keeping order: *Paul Mallinson*

Choosing a shortlist for a *PC ZONE* Supertest has never been easy. In the past the team have argued long and hard for games they think deserve re-appraising in our probing, genre-busting discussions. So imagine our dilemma, when presented with the simple task of selecting ten games for this feature and knowing that each one must have the potential of being crowned The *PC ZONE* Game of the Millennium.

Being a forward-looking publication we decided on the definition of 'The *PC ZONE* Game of the Millennium' as being: 'The game that epitomises the pinnacle of gaming excellence at this moment in time.' In other words: the one game that shows, more than any other, just where the future of PC gaming lies.

After weeks of consultation the team finally came up with this starting point: 10 PC games held in high regard by the writers of the magazine. We chose not to be forced into including certain genres (no one here's gonna argue for *Falcon 4.0* as The *PC ZONE* Game of the

↑ The Jury? 12 good men and true: L to R: Paul 'Mallo' Mallinson reviewed *System Shock 2* (*PCZ* #80, 95%) ✪ Richie Shoemaker ✪ Dave Woods ✪ Craig Vaughan ✪ Andrew Wright reviewed *Civilization II: Test Of Time* (*PCZ* #80, 84%) ✪ Dave 'Macca' McCandless reviewed *Unreal Tournament* (*PCZ* #81, 90%) ✪ Steve Hill reviewed *Tiberian Sun* (*PCZ* #81, 90% ✪ Chris Anderson, Editor, raconteur, wit and *System Shock 2* product champion ✪ Daniella Emery wore a frock and enjoyed it (*PCZ* #83, Supertest) ✪ Mark Hill ✪ Paul 'Prezzer' Presley reviewed *Hidden & Dangerous* (*PCZ* #79, 91%) and *Homeworld* (*PCZ* #92, 94%) ✪ Keith Pullin

✪ PHOTOGRAPHY Phil Ward VENUE The Playing Fields


Hidden & Dangerous


Homeworld


System Shock 2


Tiberian Sun


Unreal Tournament

MILLENNIUM



The highly coveted *PC ZONE* Game Of The Millennium trophy. There can only be one winner.

Millennium), and we all agreed to vote democratically for an overall winner (by secret ballot) at the end of the discussion. We did this by awarding ten points to our favourite game on the list, and one point to our least favourite.

You may not agree with our shortlist (and, yes, there's no *Quake III*, and *Age Of Empires II* hadn't been around long enough for us to assess it in absolute detail), or even with our choice of eventual winner, but you cannot dismiss our reasons for choosing these games.

Ultimately, we each retain our own preferences, but the winner of this special Supertest will have gained the overall approval of the *PC ZONE* team.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

Steve: It's a football game. If you don't like football you've got something wrong with you. Football is great – it's a natural sport, a world sport. I've just reviewed the update, which is even better, incidentally.

Mallo: I like football, but I don't play *Championship Manager 3*.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

The be-all and end-all of football management games – according to 'real' football fans anyway. Could only have come about on PC and is a testament to the anal nature of a large proportion of the UK games-buying public.

Score	93%, *PCZ* #73
Developer	Sports Interactive
Publisher	Eidos
Price	£34.99

Steve: Well, you're wrong.

Keith: There are football fans that prefer action football games, such as *FIFA* and that lot, and there are those that prefer stat-oriented football games. With the latter you can actually learn a lot about football and the teams.

Chris: Mallo's point is valid though, because I like football and I hate *CM3*, or any of them. I've been made to play it for the purposes of this feature and I hated it. It's an upgrade for *Microsoft Excel* with colour and sound if you ask me.

Richie: *(To Chris)* You've got a bigger love elsewhere haven't you?

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Dan: I don't like football, but I like *Champ Manager 3*.

Andrew: I like football – I'm a supporter of Newcastle United by the way – and I do go to games and follow my team, but that doesn't mean that I want to sit in front of my PC and play football games.

Mark: Before I bought *CM2*, I'd completely lost interest in football, but after I started playing it my interest in real world football sparked and I began reading the newspapers every day. The same for *CM3*, only better.

Steve: It f**ks your life up.

Dave: Personally I'm fanatical about football and I played *Champ Manager 3* and just couldn't get on with it at all.

Steve: What's wrong with it?

Dave: For one you can't have a full time job and play *Championship Manager 3*. You need to spend 12 hours a day with it.

Steve: Yeah.

Dave: You've either got the time or you haven't.

Keith: You tend not to go out very much when you're playing it. It's a great game though.

Steve: It is. It's not just for Christmas – it's for life.

Mallo: I don't find it that fulfiling. I sit there feeling guilty, thinking, 'I'm wasting my life playing this…'

Macca: But you get that playing any game.

Chris: Who here likes *Championship Manager 3*, besides Steve?



Dan: I do – it's f**King excellent.

Keith: *CM3* is absolutely astounding. It doesn't have pretty graphics, it doesn't have amazing sound, but for some reason there's something about this game that keeps *millions* of people playing it.

Dave: It's fulfiling a fantasy, isn't it?

Steve: But *CM3* is more realistic than that. It's something that you can relate to. For instance I support 'The Chester'. In the game I was trying to sign this player, Howard Ferrinton. Then I went to see Chester in real life and he scored two goals against us! It was absolutely sickening. I'd been chasing him for a week…

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Steve: How surreal is that? And things like that crop up all the time. The real life crossover is incredible. If you're in the middle of a *Championship Manager* season you can't watch real football without thinking: 'f**king hell, I fancy him…' You start making notes about players you're going to sign. Also, I just finished 16th with Chester, which is where they always finish. They've finished 16th in each of the last two seasons.

Andrew: What's exciting about managing a middle Second Division side knowing that year after year they're gonna finish 16th in the league with no decent players?

Steve: It's all about survival.

Mallo: And hope.

> **"The real life crossover is incredible"**
>
> **STEVE'S HAVING TROUBLE DISTINGUISHING REALITY FROM *CM3***

Keith: *CM3* has no boundaries. There's no beginning and no end, you just play and you just get into it.

Steve: You've got history behind you.

Keith: Yeah, you're jumping into this universe that you can play for as long as you like, however you see fit, with whatever tactics you want to employ.

Prezzer: In other football management games there is usually something missing. There is nothing missing in this.

Craig: It struck me that its comprehensiveness worked against it. Playing it became a chore and I was switching off all the options so I could get through the bloody season because I'd had enough of the damn thing. It's compulsive, don't get me wrong, but it's 'information overload' – too much, too quick. Which I think defeats the object.

Dave: Without that depth, without that comprehensiveness, it wouldn't work.

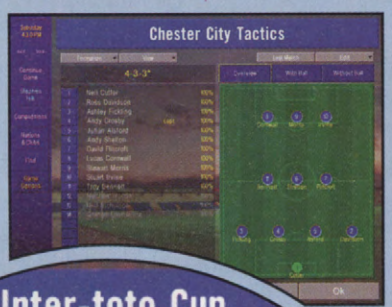
Dan: There are definitely two camps here – you either love it or you hate it. Apart from Macca who hasn't played it.

Macca: I like football. I like watching it and playing it. I don't support any teams and I can't be bothered with all this tribal bollocks. *CM3* appeals to a certain mindset, and I just don't have that mindset. I acknowledge that the mindset exists. And that it's f**king sad…

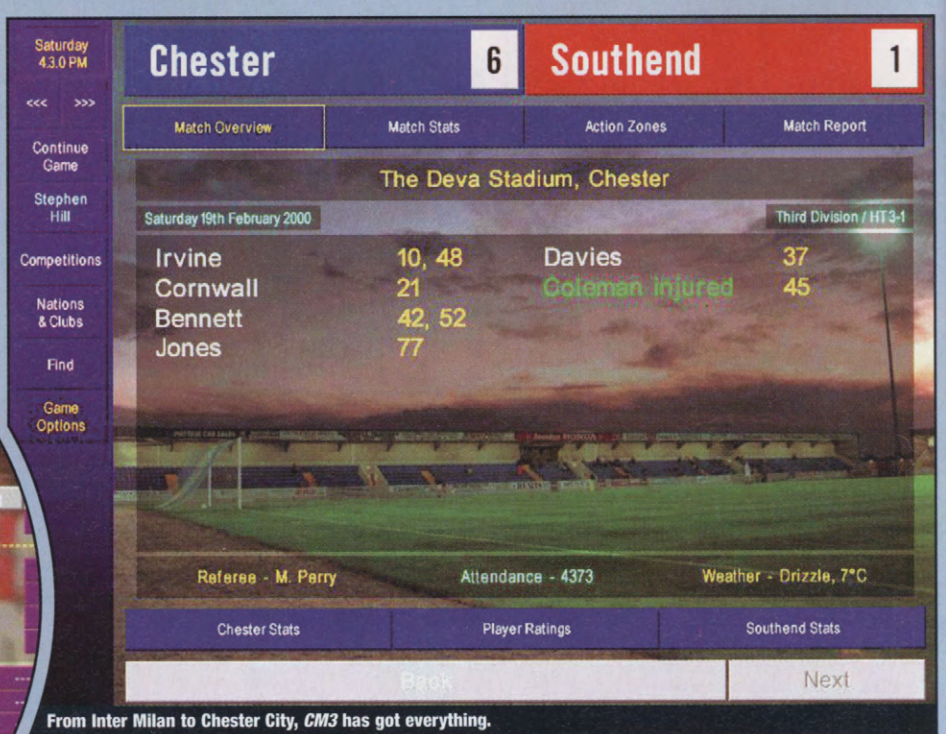
Everyone: *(Laughs)*

The be-all and end-all of football management games.

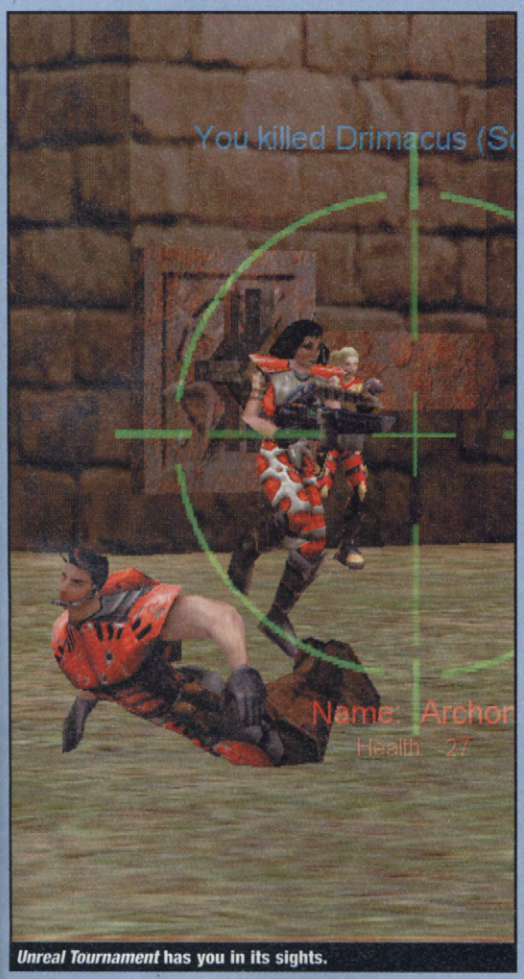
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From Inter Milan to Chester City, *CM3* has got everything.



Unreal Tournament has you in its sights.


Bang, you're virtually dead.


Go capture that flag, mate.


Come on, do you *really* want to mow her down?

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Chris: No one's playing *Unreal Tournament*.
Macca: Yes they are. While you're at home being a plus three druid we're all in the office f**king killing each other!
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Macca: I went to The Playing Fields last week to play *Unreal Tournament* with a bunch of people – and I *never* do that. And I *paid* for it!
Mallo: I saw *Unreal Tournament* at E3 back in May and thought it was absolutely amazing then. They've turned the whole thing around with this new approach to gameplay.
Macca: They've also improved the weapons as well. The guns in the original *Unreal* are *shit*. They sound bad, they look bad. This time they've really beefed up the weapons. *Unreal Tournament* has set a new standard. It's got all these multiplayer options – although not all of them work – but it's just effortless to get going. Bots fill up your players and when a real human player enters a Bot dies. It juggles it, keeps it going. The Bots are outstanding. They're good without being supernatural and will auto adjust, so that they will react to your playing. They will 'up' their game to combat you, so you're constantly improving.
Dan: It's the antithesis to *Half-Life* really. *Unreal Tournament*'s got no storyline to it at all, but it doesn't need it – it's all about fighting and killing. You can keep going back to it, time after time after time, but how long that will last depends on how far you want to take it.
Mallo: *Unreal Tournament* will soon become a high stakes sport. People will start winning money in big competitions.
Prezzer: It's an arcade game. If you want a quick 30-minute thrash at something…
Everyone: *(Whey-hey!)*
Prezzer: I was going to use the word 'stress reliever' but I decided not to…
Macca: I would say, though, that a lot of the levels are actually a bit shit.
Dan: Some of the maps aren't interchangeable. There are some really good ones that you can play in Assault, but not in Deathmatch.
Mallo: They've still got Dark Match in there, where you run around in pitch black rooms, which is really good.
Macca: InstaGib – one shot kills is really, really good.
Richie: The thing is, a Deathmatch map has got to move in on itself a couple of times.
Mallo: What about you Steve? You like your shoot 'em ups.
Steve: I'm not good enough to enjoy it. I just can't be arsed to put in the hours. I've had a dabble, yeah. It is good. It saves you money playing games over the Internet.



Craig: I'm the same as Steve – not too good at it.
Chris: I love the graphics – they're great.
Richie: Garish, too colourful…
Mallo: A bit too sci-fi.
Chris: That's exactly what I like about it.
Macca: If you play it on a Pentium 500 and a TNT2 card at 1024 by 768 it looks f**king awesome.
Dan: *Unreal* doesn't have any of the rusty pipes and dirty walls of *Half-Life*. *Unreal*'s really clean…
Steve: Yeah, it's far too glossy.
Macca: Yeah, yeah – I agree.
Dave: *Unreal Tournament* is fantastic. I love the graphics. The Bots are what make the game basically. They're fallible, and the auto adjust feature works – you notice them changing.
Richie: No one's even mentioned the interface yet. You've got four or five keys to issue orders to your team – it works brilliantly, better even than *Hidden & Dangerous*.

"I went to The Playing Fields last week to play *Unreal Tournament* with a bunch of people. And I *paid* for it!"
***UT* GETS MACCA'S SEAL OF APPROVAL**

Prezzer: I was useless at *Quake*, useless at *Quake II*, pretty bad at *Half-Life*, but *Unreal Tournament* is one of the few of these games I've played where I've actually started to feel like I'm learning, I'm progressing, I'm getting better at it. The learning curve is very good.
Macca: Overall, though, it's a fun game. More so than *Quake*, and more so even than *Half-Life* networked.
Mallo: Good God! I never thought I'd hear Macca say that.
Dave: If you want to get better at these games and are not scared to play it, *Unreal Tournament* is your best bet.
Andrew: I want to go and buy it now, it sounds *that* good.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Another major step forward for the first-person shoot 'em up genre, *Unreal Tournament* could almost be considered a sport in its own right. Practise at home with realistic 'Bots', then prove yourself in the online arena.

Score	90%, *PCZ* #81
Developer	Epic
Publisher	GT
Price	£34.99



Civilization may not look like anything special, but its addictive qualities are second to none.



Lots of options, lots of menus, and lots of fun. That's what *Civilization* is all about.



There's so much to take in that at times it really does feel like you're running your own country.

CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME

Andrew: It's the only game on this list that I would take with me to a desert island and know that I would play forever.

Mallo: No you wouldn't. There's no power on a desert island…

Andrew: It never plays the same. Every time you play it it's completely different.

Mallo: It does end. How many years does it span again?

Andrew: About 3000 years.

Mallo: *Call To Power* gave us four to five thousand years to play with.

Keith: I tend to find that in the first thousand or so years you get everything, and then it's a bit of a slog to go through the rest of the game.

Andrew: There are a finite number of units to discover, but you're supposed to use different combinations each time you play. You never get all the technology together in one game.

Dan: *Civ* is the second best-selling game of all time, after *SimCity*. That obviously says something about its appeal. It is a fantastic game: it's very open-ended and you get different outcomes – it's probably the most addictive out of all the games here.

Mallo: People accept it more readily than they would a 3D strategy game. I like *Civ* because it's a simple idea – and also because it's turn-based.

Chris: Some of the biggest-selling games ever, like *X-COM*, have been turn-based. They have mass appeal, it's not a niche market. When you look at this list there are only two games on it that really make you think about what you're doing, and this is one of them. When you play turn-based you do build proper strategies. You don't get that when you play something like *Tiberian Sun*.

Dan: It's an age thing as well. Turn-based players tend to be older than RTS fans.

Mallo: Funny that you don't get put off by the looks. It's been a few years since I last played *Civ*, but it still looks acceptable.

Dan: Again, it is an environment you can relate to.

Andrew: The AI is good – not brilliant – but it does make a good opponent.

Dan: There are few games with decent AI, but *Civ* is one of them.

Chris: *Civ* has got huge depth – you'd never get that from a real-time strategy game. My ultimate game would have all the decisions made in a turn-based environment, then it would branch out into RTS like *Age Of Empires*. *Civ III* is still going to be turn-based.

Andrew: The idea behind a turn-based game is that when you move an army forward to a city, you don't get a general doing that on the spur of the moment – they plan it. So when the army moves forward, it's a well-planned move that may have taken 48 hours to decide upon. The result then depends on the real-time actions of the soldiers and junior commanders. That's where they could blend the two together.

Richie: I like real-time strategy games that you can pause, like *Age Of Empires*.



Mallo: *Abomination* from Eidos was a good mix of both. It was essentially real-time, but you could pause the game by hitting Space and still issue orders. For me, that feature transformed the game.

Keith: All these sort of titles are glorified Amiga games. They're not exactly pushing the boundaries of technology are they?

Chris: But it's all about gameplay!

Everyone: *(Uproar)*

Keith: Yeah, but we're looking for games that push the boundaries.

Chris: This does, in terms of gameplay.

Richie: *Civ II* is the only game you can buy that accurately simulates the entire world and how it's developed.

Steve: No it doesn't. It's a stylised version of the world.

Dan: That's bollocks! You get occasions where you get spears attacking tanks and the spears win! That's complete arse.

Craig: For me *Civ II* shot its bolt too early. I'm not into this type of game and it got repetitive very quickly. I can see the appeal though.

Macca: I haven't played *Civ II*…

Prezzer: Have you played any of these games?

> **"It's probably the most addictive out of all the games here"**
>
> DAN'S A *CIV II* JUNKIE

Macca: Hold on! I haven't played *Civ II* because I know how addictive these f**kers are. I know that once I start playing a game such as this I will not stop playing it. So I just avoid them – I haven't got enough time to play them! In fact, I'm scared of them.

Steve: I had *CM3* for ages before I played it but I knew that once the wrapper was off that was it – relationship in tatters, no food.

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Richie: One thing I will say is that the graphics in *Test Of Time* are shit compared to the original *Civ II*. They look really confusing and muddy.

Chris: One thing you've got to remember about *Civ II* is that it's a game you'll still be playing six months after you've bought it – if it's your kind of game.

Keith: It's a game with undoubted compulsive, addictive qualities like *CM3*, but it *is* still niche.

Mark: But it's the second biggest-selling game of all time!

Keith: You know what I mean.

CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME

CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME

This world-renowned turn-based strategy classic received an update recently in the form of *Test Of Time*. Now with 16-bit colour, animation, plus sci-fi and fantasy versions, it is a good example of truly timeless gameplay.

Score	84% *PCZ*#80
Developer	Hasbro
Publisher	Hasbro
Price	£34.99

FINAL FANTASY VII

Dave: It's the best non-game here. I completed it and thought: 'Did I actually do anything there?' The story's great and the graphics are good, if dated.

Macca: It's Japanese. Not many Japanese games make it to the PC. I played the first disc of the PlayStation version and thought, 'What the f**k is this?!'

Dave: Every 10 seconds you get into a fight, which is *so* boring.

Macca: I didn't enjoy the fight sequences either. Maybe because I'm more of a real-time action fanatic. I don't know why, but it just didn't click with me.

Mallo: It's an epic. A brilliant game. The turning point for me was the bit where the story goes back in time. It turned from being a straightforward adventure game into something movie-like, in a way.

Chris: It's definitely one of the best games I've ever played, but I played it on PlayStation and think it's much better on Sony's machine. The cinematics look *shite* on PC. I'm not sure it made the transition successfully.

Dave: I agree. I completed it on the PlayStation, then reviewed it on PC. I played



it all the way through – it was exactly the same, but it just didn't work on a monitor.

Mark: I was incredibly disappointed. I hadn't played it on PlayStation, and it really sounded like my kind of thing, but the PC version felt like I was playing it on an emulator. The controls are so incredibly naff.

Prezzer: Role-playing games on consoles and role-playing games on PCs are totally different beasts and the fact that this was marketed as a role-playing game on the PC is wrong.

Chris: It's more of a role-playing game on the PC than many PC role-playing games claim to be. It's a proper role-playing game.

Dave: I don't think it is a role-playing game on the PC.

Macca: What's so good about *Final Fantasy VII* anyway?

Dave: The story is brilliant.

Mallo: Clever twists. Sequences that take you back to the same location at a different point in time…

Dave: You're not actually who you think you are at the start of the game.

Mallo: Also, there's a point in the game where one of the lead characters dies…

> **"I felt like I was playing it on an emulator"**
>
> MARK THINKS *FINAL FANTASY VII* SHOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER PROGRAMMED ON PC

Macca: Oh, and did you cry?

Mallo: No, but I know someone that *almost* did. If a game can generate that much empathy then it must be rather special.

Dave: You *do* think, 'She can't be dead, it's not possible, surely?'

Andrew: *Final Fantasy VII* is the only game here that I'd be embarrassed to be seen playing. I couldn't get into the mindset of being this funny little creature with a funny little face.

Mallo: Too cute?

Andrew: Yeah, too cartoony for me.

Chris: So you're not embarrassed playing *Panzer General*, but you won't be seen dead with *Final Fantasy*…?

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Craig: It reminded me of *Outcast* – talk, walk, fight… If I want to do that, I'll go down the pub.

Everyone: *(Uproar)*

Dan: As a console game it's fantastic, but on PC…

Craig: We're snobs on PC. Why should we have to put up with second-rate conversions of PlayStation games?!

Mallo: It's not exactly a 'second-rate conversion'. They made a few mistakes with the graphics, but it's the story and the game that counts.

Mark: It's overrated.

Chris: Oh f**k off! There are loads of little things in *Final Fantasy VII* that you will never find if you don't spend any time with it. There's a games arcade with real games that you can play – it's brilliant. It's so varied. It's one of the most imaginative games I've ever played in my life.

Dan: The first third is incredibly linear. It's only when the game goes full 3D and you get to do your own thing that it starts to feel like a proper game.

Mallo: It took me between six and eight hours of play to realise just how good a game it was.

Prezzer: If the game is so heavily based on the storyline and it doesn't grab you during the first eight hours, then you're not going to be compelled to stick with it.

Dave: The spells are annoying too. Near the end there's a spell that takes about 20 minutes to build up, then you're dead.

Mallo: That's the Japanese influence, but it's different.

Dan: Fiery swords and things are good for the first three or four times, but after a while it's like, f**king hell, just get on with it! You could almost go away, have a cup of tea and a fag and come back to it after they've finished casting the spells… The big battles at the end can take 45 minutes to make one whole turn.

Steve: Now that does sound like the dullest thing on Earth.

Mallo: There are plenty of people out there who like it.

Steve: Well I'm not one of them.

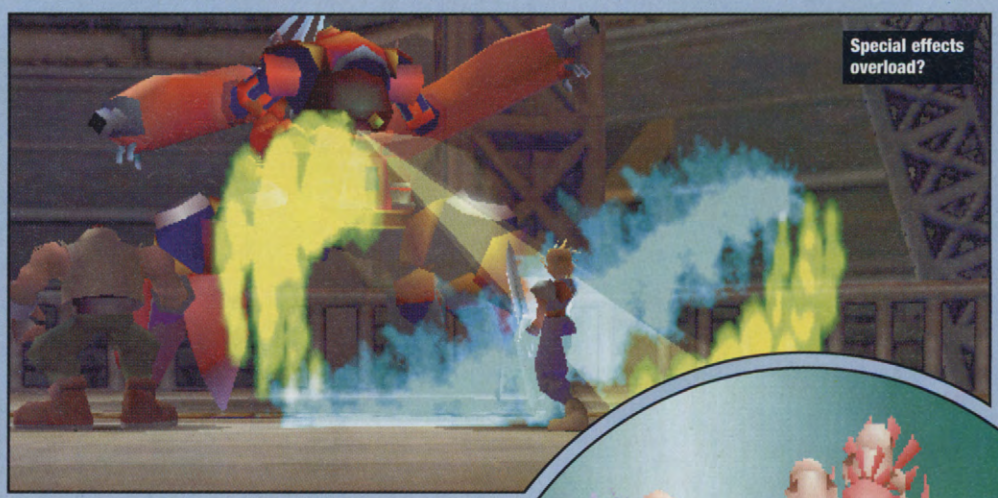
FINAL FANTASY VII

This Japanese-made, Manga-style adventure/RPG cross breed was so well received on PlayStation that at one point it seemed that games were at last being taken seriously. It was later ported to the PC, with no enhancements.

Score	93%, *PCZ* #66
Developer	Squaresoft
Publisher	Eidos
Price	£44.99



A bird's eye view of *Final Fantasy VII*, yesterday.



Special effects overload?



The game features magic and physical combat...



And cute birds that you ride.

HALF-LIFE

Mallo: *Half-Life* then?
Everyone: *(Cheers)*
Mallo: Okay, next game…
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: It really captured the imagination.
Dan: It was better than we expected.
Macca: *Half-Life* works on so many levels. As a piece of entertainment it's just got so much in it. It's got rhythm – rhythm of gameplay. Variety. One minute you're jumping across boxes, the next you're up against really good AI. Next it's really dark. Next you have to work a train… A constant variety of environments and challenges. Totally unexpected, really exciting – you *really* wanna get to the next bit.
Mark: I completely agree. It's such a well-directed story. *Half-Life* is very linear, but it's just so well connected…
Mallo: It's surprise after surprise, isn't it?
Macca: It is.

HALF-LIFE

Regarded by us all as the best game of all time, *Half-Life* had a huge impact, not only within the first-person shoot 'em up genre, but on all of gaming in general. The single-player game is still amazing, and multiplayer even better.

Score	95%, *PCZ* #71
Developer	Valve
Publisher	Sierra
Price	£34.99

Dan: There are bits in *Half-Life* that really make you jump.
Mallo: I've seen Richie leap out of his chair a few times.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Richie: Yeah, it's the way that it just draws you in – right from the beginning. The intro is simply amazing. Little scripted bits that are just there for fun. People falling down lift shafts…
Mallo: I really like the bit where you're walking through the pipe and it collapses while you're inside it, then you find yourself in a completely new area.
Richie: Macca said this when we did the First-Person Shooter Supertest: the weapons are perfectly balanced.
Macca: And they sound f**king brilliant. You gotta play this game in the quiet – you've gotta get into character. In a dark room with your headphones on, just getting into it.
Mallo: Just like *System Shock 2*, *Half-Life* is a very quiet game – eerily silent – with lots of clever sound effects that create a scary atmosphere.
Macca: The soldiers… When you first meet them you think, 'Aw, soldiers. I'll f**king take them…'
Mallo: You can hear their radio calls…
Macca: Backing off…
Mallo: They throw grenades at you…
Macca: Re-grouping, coming back…
Mallo: It's such a step forward.
Macca: And you can't just sit there and stand off, you have to take cover and hide. You have to be cunning.
Mallo: *(To Macca)* And what about those female ninjas?!
Macca: They were *amazing!* The way I play it is: whenever I come out of a battle, even if I'm low on health I *have* to save it. I was on 10 per cent health at the point where I encountered the ninjas and it took me f**king *ages* to take them out. But I felt *so* good when I'd done it.



Prezzer: Everyone here has their favourite moment in the game. Up to now we've talked about the game as a whole, whereas now it's: 'Ooh, I remember that bit and that bit…' That's what makes *Half-Life* so good.
Macca: It excites me because in five years time a game like *Half-life* will be f**king *amazing* – with the graphics and technology that'll be around. It's the future.
Richie: What they did with that engine was just amazing. And it wasn't the *Quake II* engine, it was the original *Quake*.
Craig: Just what went on with the level design? Was *Xen* done out of house? It's so out of place.
Mallo: Initially I was like, 'Oh wow!', but then I played it and realised *Xen* was shit. The success of *Half-Life* was because it was set in a recognisable environment. Then suddenly there's this massive jolt and you're bouncing around an alien planet. It *is* still enjoyable but it puts me off playing through the game again.
Keith: I'm not really into first-person shooters. However, *Half-Life* and *Aliens Versus Predator* are the exception to the rule. *Half-Life* gave the genre the kick up the backside that it needed.

> **"*Half-Life* gave the genre the kick up the backside that it needed"**
> **SAYS KEITH, ANOTHER *HALF-LIFE* CONVERT**

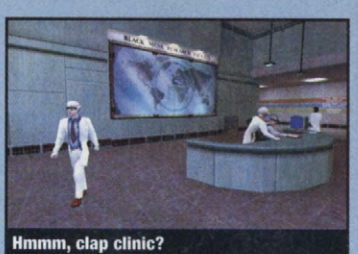
Mallo: And *Team Fortress Classic* takes it even further.
Steve: Hopefully we'll start seeing more *Half-Life* clones in the near future.
Mallo: How about you Andrew?
Andrew: I love it. I concentrate on the *Team Fortress* side of things – on multiplayer. It's wonderful, absolutely wonderful. I play at home on a network. To me, *Half-Life* is generations ahead of the others.
Prezzer: It made camping acceptable again, by turning it into sniping. Everyone used to hate camping before that but, all of a sudden, you could snipe and everything was okay again.
Macca: It's not like *Quake* where everyone's running around and stuff, you have to think more about the environment, dashing across gaps, always checking corners, fighting *for real*…
Dan: I think it's overshadowed now by *Unreal Tournament*.
Mallo: That's debatable.
Steve: Isn't that why we're here?



***Half Life*: the 'daddy' of all shoot 'em ups.**



Mind the green goo. It'll hurt you.



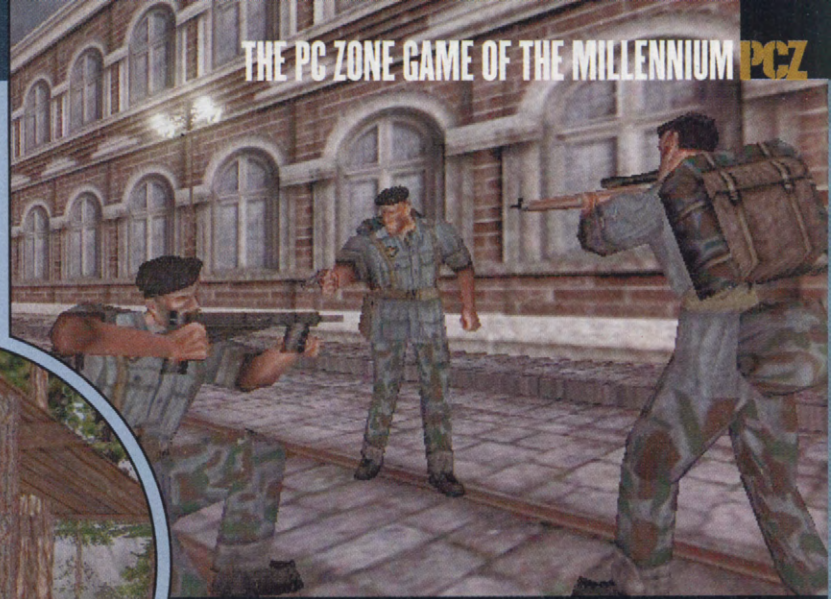
Hmmm, clap clinic?



Mindless, wanton destruction can be fun.



Hidden & Dangerous is not about gung-ho combat – it's more about stealth and cunning.



A WWII version of the final scene in *Reservoir Dogs*?



A cushy desk job will protect you from the bullets.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Prezzer: *Hidden & Dangerous* is a brilliant game, but because it was so bugged – if we're talking about 'the pinnacle of gaming excellence' here – you definitely have to take that into account.

Dave: There's loads of tension in *Hidden & Dangerous*. Even on the first level, the bit where you're crawling under the bridge, there's a tangible feeling of fear. But I agree with you about the bugs, they made it almost intolerable.

Dan: It was really nice to hear British accents in a game, rather than American – and good ones too, not just Dick Van Dyke-style voices.

Mark: For me the bugs weren't that much of an issue. It was like reading a really good book that is printed on really bad paper that breaks in your hand now and again.

Mallo: Hold on – that's serious!

Mark: The book's content stays the same.

Mallo: You mean like sticking jazz mags together? What's the f**king point? You're never gonna be able to read them again!

Macca: *Hidden & Dangerous* does have an undeniable quality about it, but…

Steve: The bugs are unforgivable. They should try harder – get more people in…

Keith: There's nothing lacking from *Hidden & Dangerous* – it's a fantastic game.

Dave: It's all about releasing a game on time, isn't it? To download a 17 meg patch was unfeasible for some people…

Macca: The 'patch conspiracy'.

Keith: It's a shame. The developers were obviously under some sort of pressure from the marketing people, or whatever, to put this game out. Okay, that's their problem, but it's quite clear that these developers are brilliant and know how to make a game.

Mallo: The publishers concerned are already renowned for rush-releasing bugged games.

Keith: But if the developers had been able to release the game in their own time what would we have been saying about it then? It might have been: 'Yeah, this is *the* best game ever…'

Steve: No, it'd never come out.

Dan: Every single game in this Supertest has been patched in some form or other.

Chris: The deciding factor should be whether the bugs prevent you from playing the game properly.

Craig: These weren't subtle bugs – they *did not* playtest that game. You've got soldiers floating around in the air; you save the game, you lose all your weapons. All sorts of nonsense.

Steve: I even found that with the demo. What's the use of a bugged demo?

Richie: But it's just not annoying, though. For some reason you begin to think, 'Aw there's another bug…' It's still a f**king amazing game.

Macca: But if you spend 30 to 40 quid on a game, it's gotta f**king work!

Keith: I played it through to the very end using the original game, no patch, and I was *upset* that I'd finished it. I wanted it to carry on. So in that respect, the bugs aren't *that* big an issue for me. There are constant surprises wherever you go – a bit like in *Half-Life*.

Dave: On the third or fourth level there's a bit with a hill with an encampment on the other side, and you've got to get round to it. You think you've cleared it and all of a sudden 10 or 12 people come running in, firing shots at you – you just shit yourself!



Mark: *Hidden & Dangerous* is probably not as strategic as many people expect.

Dan: Although it *is* a real-time action game it's a very different kettle of fish to *Half-Life*; you haven't got the incessant combat, there's a lot more lurking around, taking your time, which does build the atmosphere but doesn't give you the instant kick that you get from *Half-Life*. I still think *Hidden & Dangerous* is a fantastic game though.

Craig: I love the vulnerability of the troops – the fact that you can be killed outright. You can empathise with them. At the end of the day we all wanna be a war hero. The bugs though – they're just taking the piss. It shows nothing but utter contempt for PC gamesplayers…

Prezzer: Make sure you blame the publishers and not the developers.

Mallo: You can't just blame publishers – the development community is often criticised for being unrealistic with targets and deadlines. Developers promise to deliver a game on time and sometimes cannot make it. But in this instance, though, Talonsoft should have realised just what they had and held it back in order to make it *extra* special.

> **"There's loads of tension in *Hidden & Dangerous*, and a tangible feeling of fear"**
>
> DAVE KNOWS THE HORRORS OF WAR

Chris: The World War II environment doesn't do anything for me.

Mallo: How can you say that, it's a godsend!

Prezzer: The subject matter is spot on – all the equipment, all the weapons and all of the vehicles…

Andrew: The weapon sounds alone are very realistic.

Mallo: If you're interested in World War II, *Hidden & Dangerous* is a revelation.

Dan: As we've said before: it's an adult version of every childhood fantasy – playing commandos with your mates.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and get yourself into the thick of World War II action in this incredible tactical action game. Despite the bugs, playing *Hidden & Dangerous* is an epic and atmospheric experience.

Score	91%, *PCZ* #79
Developer	Illusionworks
Publisher	Talonsoft
Price	£34.99

HOMEWORLD

Richie: In *Homeworld* you feel that you're guiding a civilisation. It's like *Battlestar Galactica* – it's very familiar. And you have to say that the graphics are amazing.
Mallo: It looked impenetrable, but it's actually quite easy to play.
Chris: I thought the interface was too fiddly. There was too much zooming in and out.



Dan: For me the initial interest was phenomenal, but then it started to wane really quickly. It's a f**king near miss basically. The research tree was nothing more than a way of trickling units to you. There wasn't much by way of surprises.
Richie: They made the classic mistake of putting everything into the skirmish game. If you play it for a couple of hours, which most people will do anyway, you know what you're getting in the single-player game. It's the same with *Tib Sun*. It's the same in all these strategy games really.

Chris: *Homeworld* is controversial in as much as you have no choice but to play in 3D. I think that was a really brave decision.
Prezzer: If anything, this re-awakened my interest in real-time strategy games. I was starting to get really bored of them because they'd all been so similar…
Mark: Are you still playing *Homeworld*?
Prezzer: Yes I am.
Dan: They got the graphics and the engine right. The story's right. But these games should be about taking more than one route down a fight – trying battles different ways. But with this you can't. It really does feel like you're going down a railway track.

> **"This re-awakened my interest in real-time strategy games"**
>
> PREZZER'S IMAGINATION PULLS OFF THE BLANKETS FOR *HOMEWORLD*

Prezzer: When playing individual battles, the scope for tactics and strategy is far greater than most real-time strategy games. Most are a war of attrition. In *Homeworld* I found myself coming up with tactics, different ways of attacking things, and varying weapons, ships and formations.
Dan: It sets a benchmark for other games to follow. It'll be like *Wolfenstein* – that was the very first proper 3D shoot 'em up, but it wasn't 'til *Doom* came out that everyone sat up and noticed. *Homeworld* is the first game to be set in a proper 3D environment, but there's undoubtedly better to come.
Prezzer: It seems to have captured the attention of a lot of my friends as well. Normally they don't give a shit about real-time strategy games, but this… I think it's the 3D space that has actually attracted more people than it's pushed away.
Dan: We need to wait for someone to steal the ideas from *Homeworld* and use them in a better game. The whole fact that it was whirly, twiddley, spinney, upside-downy is really cool though.
Chris: Mmm. It's too much like hard work.
Mallo: Could it be a better game to watch rather than to play?
Prezzer: No, *Homeworld* is amazing to play. You've just got to give it a chance.

HOMEWORLD

HOMEWORLD

Successfully marrying real-time strategy and 3D graphics with an engrossing and believable storyline, *Homeworld* is already considered a hugely significant and influential PC title, which is surprising as it was only released a few weeks ago.

Score	94%, *PCZ* #82
Developer	Relic
Publisher	Sierra
Price	£34.99



Homeworld brings colour to the recesses of outer space.



In space, no one can hear you explode.



Trippy light traits, man.

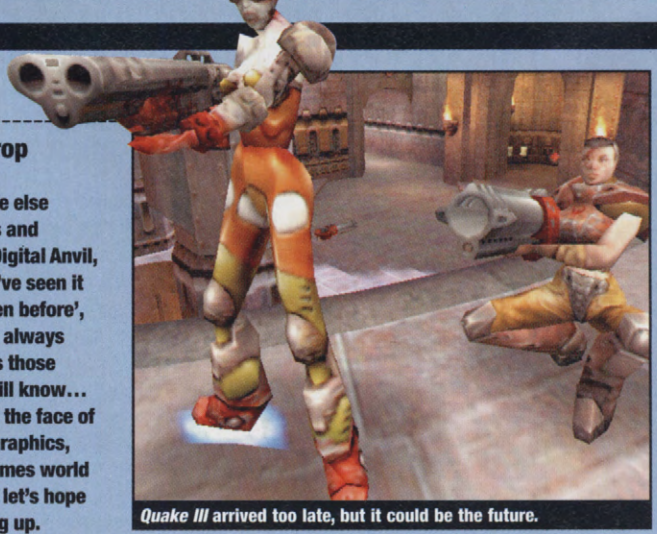
INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM...

It's time for the *PCZ* team to wax lyrical about the best of next year's crop

So, which games are going to pick up where this little lot left off then? Well, it'd be an understatement to say that we're sweating in anticipation of Valve's forthcoming *Team Fortress 2*. Everyone's hoping that it'll be something of a *Half Life*/*Unreal Tournament* cross-breed and blow everything out of the water when it eventually arrives next Summer. Can it pick up the baton passed on by those aforementioned heavyweights? Only time will tell.

In terms of technology, *Blade* (now with Infogrames) and *Black & White* still look pretty ground-breaking, but the longer the developers leave them, the more chance everyone else has got of stealing all their best ideas and pre-empting them. *Freelancer*, from Digital Anvil, is also being described by those who've seen it as 'astounding – like nothing ever seen before', so we live in hope of that, and there's always *System Shock 3* to look forward to, as those who've completed *System Shock 2* will know…

Over the next few years we expect the face of PC gaming to change again – better graphics, better sound, bigger games. In the games world nothing gets in the way of progress – let's hope none of us have any problems keeping up.



Quake III arrived too late, but it could be the future.

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Chris: Game of the year for me, without a shadow of a doubt.
Macca: Better than *Everquest*?
Prezzer: Why is it better than *Half-Life*?
Chris: How much time have you got?
Steve: Not much.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Chris: *Half-Life* has got brilliant graphics, a great storyline, blah, blah, blah, but at the end of the day all you are doing is just shooting people in the face. *System Shock 2* is a completely different kettle of fish. There are three completely different ways of playing the game. It's a f**king amazing idea and it had better win or something here's seriously wrong. In fact, I'm the Editor – if it doesn't win, I'll change it.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: I leapt out of my chair – completely panicking on occasions – when I played this game. As I said in my review: one of the most suspenseful games ever made.
Macca: That's brilliant. A game hasn't been able to give me that type of feeling since *Dungeon Master*.
Chris: You get that the whole way through it. There are loads of rooms that you are literally too afraid to go in. Especially when you're only four or five levels in and aren't that good. You start thinking, 'That looks like the kind of room where something bad's gonna happen.'
Dan: There were a few puzzles that seemed like a time-wasting exercise, purely put in there to extend the life of the game – such as having to get the transmitter code from the art terminals. I stopped playing the game because of it.
Mallo: The game is forcing you to explore one particular area, that's all. If you can't be bothered to do it, why not go and play something else?!
Everyone: *(Ooooh!)*
Mark: A couple of other things that make it such a great game: one is the security system, and the other is that you get a good sense of the horror that must have preceded your arrival. Having said that, the lack of other characters may put people off.
Mallo: The whole idea is that you're on your own – alone.
Richie: It looks like a difficult game to get into, but in fact the tutorial is superb…



"*System Shock 2* is a work of genius. It's an incredible experience for many different reasons"

CHRIS IS HUGELY IMPRESSED

Mallo: The use of the right mouse button is spot on.
Richie: …and even though some of the characters look a bit pants, it is actually a really atmospheric game.
Macca: I love it. I remember the first one, which reminded me of *Ultima Underworld*, which I still think is one of the best games that has ever been made.
Craig: I was stupid enough to play it on my four foot telly in the lounge and I had to turn it off.
Mallo: Did you have to nip off and change your trousers?
Craig: I'm fairly world-hardened, but the suspense and the fear that it brought out of me – I was hearing things in the house… I was sweating. I had to chill out, go away and come back to it.
Mallo: If you play *System Shock 2* late at night, you start to hear things…
Craig: The game creates paranoia. And any game that can do that…
Chris: *Half-Life* is an incredibly good shoot 'em up, but that's all it is at the end of the day. *System Shock 2* is a hell of a lot more than that. There's so much more to it.
Keith: And *System Shock 2* is a proper RPG. So many games, such as *Lands Of Lore III*, claim to be RPGs, but are not the games they set out to be. *System Shock 2* is, completely.
Chris: *System Shock 2* is a work of genius. It's an incredible experience for many different reasons.
Andrew: *System Shock 2* is an adventure game to me. It's not a shooter or an RPG…
Dan: It's a RPG, with first-person aspects.
Mallo: I'd say it's more first-person shooter than RPG.
Dave: Well in that respect it's going to appeal to three kinds of gamers, isn't it?
Richie: But are we going to be playing it in six months time?
Craig: Once you've played through the game as all three characters, then I doubt it.
Dan: There's a team-based multiplayer patch just out.
Mallo: Then let's check it out.
Steve: Yes, let's.
Richie: Yes, come on… *(Ad nauseam – Ed).*

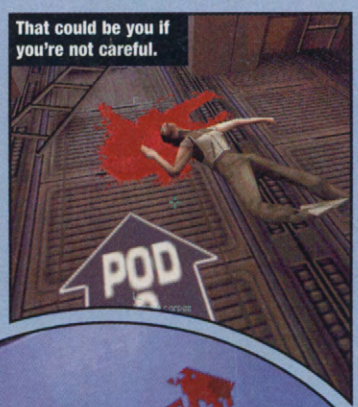
SYSTEM SHOCK 2

This recently-released sci-fi/horror masterpiece is currently gripping PC games-players up and down the country, and will continue to do so well into the near future, with gameplay that contains something for everyone.

Score	95%, *PCZ* #80
Developer	Looking Glass Studios
Publisher	EA
Price	£39.99



System Shock 2 is already considered a classic of its time, but I doubt he's thinking about that now.







Horny punches the air because his game was chosen for the Millennium Supertest.



It's good to be bad in *Dungeon Keeper II*.



Goblins, as far as the eye can see. That'll please Steve Hill.

DUNGEON KEEPER II

Mallo: *Dungeon Keeper II* is a great game – brilliantly designed with fantastic graphics and a really good atmosphere, but it's maybe a bit too linear and a bit too short-lived. The first five or six levels especially seemed to be over really quickly. But it is an excellent game and a huge improvement over the first one.

Dan: Ah, but do you get your money's worth?

Mallo: Dunno. Didn't pay for it.

Steve: Do any of us pay for games?

Mallo: You could probably complete the single-player game in less than a week and I doubt whether you'd go back to it.

Chris: You could say that about *Half-Life*, *Hidden & Dangerous*, *Quake II*…

Dan: You're joking!

Prezzer: Well, I'm still playing *Half-Life*!

Mark: *(Surprised)* *Hidden & Dangerous*, in just a week?!

Andrew: My son finished *Final Fantasy VII* in a week.

Chris: With a walkthrough?

Andrew: No.

Chris: I don't believe you!

Macca: I guess that he's got a lot of time on his hands?

Steve: Or no job.

Mallo: Or in prison.

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Keith: I've played the whole thing, right through to the end and I think they should have put more into it. It's a really well-programmed game, there's no doubt about that, but there should've been more in it – like an RPG element. There aren't enough sub-missions in the levels.

Mallo: I like the fact that it takes the piss out of beardy weirdy strategy games, and the fact that you play on the side of evil.

Dan: Computer games are not funny and they shouldn't try to be.

Macca: Jokes are not the only way to be funny. You can have a sense of irony, but it is a plus point if a game has a tongue-in-cheek attitude about itself.

Mark: When something points out its own flaws, and doesn't try to be overly serious it's easier to like it.

Macca: There are funny situations in *Half-Life* – you flick a switch and a whole bunch of scientists plummet to their death…

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Dan: So killing someone is funny?

Macca: In that context, yes. The irony element of *Dungeon Keeper II* definitely adds to the appeal.

Prezzer: It looks impenetrable. I played it for a short while and gave up. I just didn't want to know.



Mallo: But you're Archmage Presley – how can you not like it?!

Everyone: *(Riotous laughter)*

Mallo: Hold on! I want to get to the bottom of this. What do you mean impenetrable?

Prezzer: It was the same as the first one – I thought, 'What the f**k is going on here?!' I don't care. I don't give a monkey's.

Andrew: I've played *Dungeon Keeper I* and *II*. I enjoyed the first game, but I found *DKII* difficult. By about the middle of the game I started getting stuck and found I had little desire to carry on. I just got swamped and lost interest.

Mallo: The single-player game is very linear and if you are forced to re-play some of the levels over and over again, then you can get bored of it. I'll admit that I didn't complete the game.

Dan: I wouldn't go back and play it again.

Keith: No. Absolutely not! Once it's done, it's done.

Mallo: Multiplayer *Dungeon Keeper II* is certainly a worthwhile distraction, if anyone can be bothered with it. What about you Steve?

> **"I like the fact that it takes the piss out of beardy weirdy strategy games"**
>
> MALLO LAUGHS ALONG WITH *DKII*

Steve: *Caesar III* is a much better game. I don't know anything about dungeons and don't care about them. Mallo frequents dungeons dressed as a monk…

Mallo: No I don't!

Mark: The concept of *Dungeon Keeper II* is brilliant. The idea of being the evil guy who controls the dungeon – to be on the opposite side of it, for once, is just fantastic.

Macca: Bullfrog shouldn't be criticised for having big ideas. Flipping the dungeon master around is a good idea, and everyone wanted to see it and they've done a reasonable version. They were brave enough to attempt it, but I think we do have to accept that this is not a triple A game.

Mallo: I disagree. It *is* a triple A, but relatively short-lived.

DUNGEON KEEPER II

The real-time strategy genre had never seen anything like it before – good versus evil, with evil winning. This wicked twist, plus the fact that they'd learned from the mistakes on the first one, gave Bullfrog an instant classic status.

Score	94%, *PCZ* #79
Developer	Bullfrog
Publisher	EA
Price	£44.99

TIBERIAN SUN

Steve: Great game.
Craig: Hated it. Where they've been and what they've been doing I do not know. Surely we should be in 3D by now?
Mallo: Not everyone can think in 3D. Steve can't – he's admitted it.
Steve: It doesn't need to be 3D. Chess isn't.
Mark: Of course it is – you pick up the pieces and move them around.
Steve: Physically, in real life. The pieces are, but the board isn't.
Mallo: *Tib Sun* didn't need to be 3D.
Richie: I agree, but there's still not a great deal to it.
Dave: It doesn't really matter about the graphics if the game is brilliant.
Steve: *Champ Manager 3* looks like a book.
Dan: *Tib Sun*'s just an add-on pack. It's the same game with new graphics… Yeah it's a great game and it'll sell…
Steve: If someone bought a PC in the last year and bought this game they'd think it was f**king brilliant.
Dan: But if you played the first one, or *Red Alert*, then there's nothing more to get you excited about it.
Steve: The first one was five years ago!
Dan: In five years you'd have expected it to have gone further than it currently has.



Craig: Look at the soldiers – they look like teddy bears.
Mallo: Yeah, they do look cartoony, and the animation is nothing special.
Craig: They look out of place. The only new thing in it are the waypoints, which have been stolen from *Dark Reign*. It looks like they wrote it three years ago, kept it hidden in a cupboard, and then thought, 'Oops, we need a *C&C* game out there', so took it out the cupboard and thought, 'We'll flog that'.
Mallo: That's harsh.
Macca: But fair.
Keith: I've played it right to the end – both sides: GDI and Nod – and as usual the only way you can win is to gather together a massive army and rush the enemy base.
Dan: You can't do a sneaky strategic one 'cos you'll get zapped by the defences.
Keith: There is slight variation occasionally when you get these mutants and you have to sneak them into a base, but then the point of the game – creating these armies, and various attack strategies – is lost.
Steve: It's not the crux of the game.
Mallo: As Steve said in his review, I think this is *still* the best version yet.
Richie: Westwood created this genre, but things have moved on since then.
Andrew: *Command & Conquer* is one of the most influential games of all time. *Tiberian Sun* will sell well, but it's not, in its current state, 'the pinnacle of gaming excellence'.

> **"Essentially the same game as before, Westwood have stuck to the formula"**
> RICHIE RECKONS THERE'S NOTHING NEW IN *TIBERIAN SUN*

Prezzer: Wouldn't they be better off just re-releasing the original?
Chris: Westwood in their arrogance just thought that they could put out the same game again and everyone would buy it. It's fair enough saying 'if it ain't broke don't fix it', but when they don't even bother to update the sodding graphics…
Mallo: I remember that we've had this argument before. So you'd rather go back to playing the original *C&C*?
Prezzer: No, but because I played *C&C* so much I've got no impetus to play *Tib Sun*. There's nothing different enough to make me take notice.
Richie: There's a direct parallel with *Age Of Empires II* – it's essentially the same game, but there are so many little things that you notice. You think, 'Yeah, there are some great ideas in here', whereas Westwood simply stuck to formula.
Dan: *Tib Sun* is not a proper sequel.
Steve: Yes it is!
Dan: No it isn't.



Tiberian Sun is the king of real-time strategy games. So we reckon.

TIBERIAN SUN

Although there are other RTS games comparable to *Tiberian Sun* (the latest in a long line of *Command & Conquer* titles), it remains an undisputed champion in almost every department. The original and still the best.

Score	90%, *PCZ* #81
Developer	Westwood
Publisher	EA
Price	£34.99

THE GAME OF THE MILLENNIUM IS...

The votes have been cast. Now it's time for the moment of truth

In the end, our search for The *PC ZONE* Game of the Millennium turned out to be something of a two-horse race. As mentioned earlier, our panelists voted for a winner by giving their favourite game on the shortlist ten points and their least favourite one point. *Championship Manager 3* received top marks from Steve and Keith and high ones from Mark and Richie, but didn't do too well with everyone else. And, although it didn't get top marks from anyone, *Hidden & Dangerous* did extremely well to come third with a highly respectable 81 points.

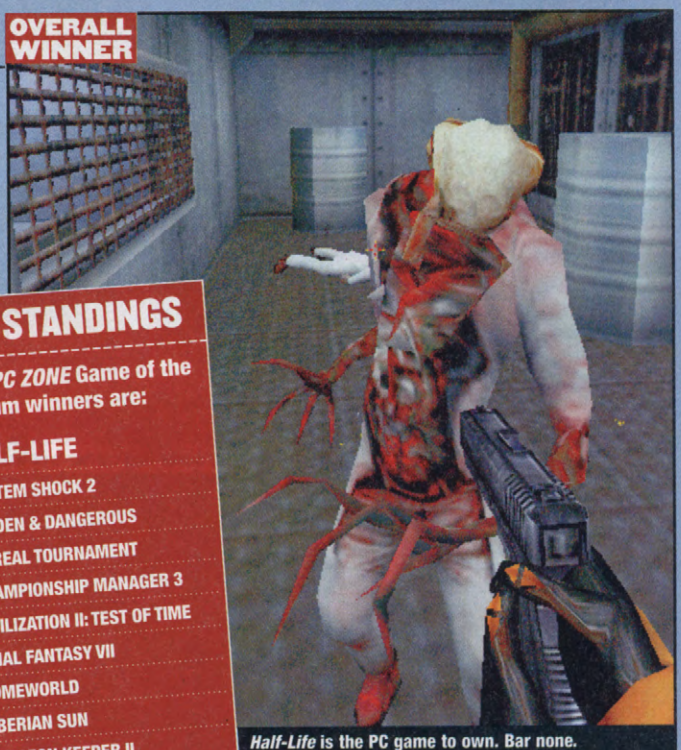
The overall winner, though, was always going to be either *System Shock 2* or *Half-Life* – both games rating very highly and scoring very well from our judges. With 96 points, *System Shock 2* had to make do with second place – *Half-Life* scooping top honours with a sensational 111 points – seven out of our twelve experts voting it as their top choice.

"I'm not surprised," said Macca upon closing, "It excites me more than any other game I've ever played. You can see the potential – they have unlocked something with this." Chris was not completely convinced with the result, adding: "I was surprised that *Half-Life* won – *System Shock 2* is a much better all-round gaming experience. I'm sure that if the readers were voting, *Half-Life* would be the game they'd all choose too."

"That's about right," said Andrew, "it's come first and second on just about everyone's list." Except Keith's. But then, he was just trying to be clever.

So there you have it: *Half-Life* is now the 'official' *PC ZONE* Game of the Millennium. If you haven't played it yet, get out there and buy it. No self-respecting PC gamesplayer should be without their copy of *Half-Life*.

OVERALL WINNER



Half-Life is the PC game to own. Bar none.

FINAL STANDINGS

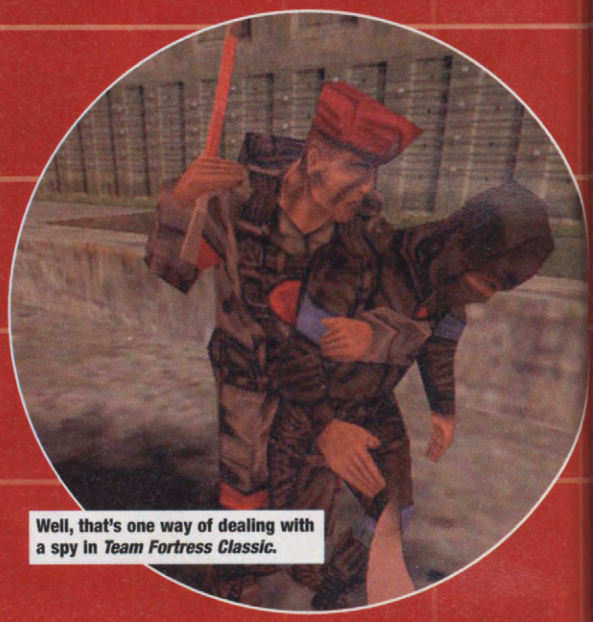
And the *PC ZONE* Game of the Millennium winners are:

1. HALF-LIFE
2. SYSTEM SHOCK 2
3. HIDDEN & DANGEROUS
4. UNREAL TOURNAMENT
5. CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3
6. CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME
7. FINAL FANTASY VII
8. HOMEWORLD
9. TIBERIAN SUN
10. DUNGEON KEEPER II

With the introduction of unmetered, high-speed access, you'll soon be paying a flat rate for online gaming. *Phil Wand* boggles at all the possibilities



Crowned King in *Ultima Online*. Some time next year, this player could find himself with more than ten million subjects.



Well, that's one way of dealing with a spy in *Team Fortress Classic*.

Looking up at the clock, you realise you've just spent the last three-and-a-half hours online. Before a long session of *Ultima Online*, you'd been clumping around a futuristic citadel in titanium armour, the mother of all machine guns clamped firmly under your right arm. Its incessant noise gave you a headache; its blistering heat curled paint on nearby walls. Fifty-three men and 11 women lay slaughtered as your monster tool spat its projectile death at their soft heads. You'd even killed *yourself* six times by pulling out pins on grenades and then forgetting to let go afterwards. This had, of course, been highly embarrassing, but at least you'd murdered all the people who laughed.

And now it's time for bed. The only trouble is, you can't help but have nightmares about the lumpiness of your games and the size of your phone bill. That's understandable. They're probably the two biggest encumbrances for the online gamer and, even today, with low-call rates and fast access, they're still spoiling the Internet experience.

What would it be like if you had to pay a single, fixed fee a month for unlimited fast access, and could then spend the entire day playing low-ping, high-quality games with *real* morons instead of computer controlled ones?

Well, seeing as that's just what's going to happen, we thought we'd take a look at the future of online gaming and how it'll affect you. With millions of people soon free to use the Internet as long as they like, whenever they like, life online is about to get very interesting, indeed.

"The electronic battlefield is now very much a reality, with hundreds of gamers gathering together in one giant game arena, all able to interact and fight one another"

There's no doubt that stutter-free games make you play better. Here we're showing some high-ping loser who's boss in *Unreal Tournament*.



ONLINE 2000

THE FUTURE IS FAST

With super fast, super cheap Internet access available some time early next year (see panel, *New Ways To Get Connected*), arcade fans will be rapturous at the improvements to their game. The electronic battlefield is now very much a reality, with hundreds of gamers gathering together in one giant game arena, all able to interact and fight with one another. Action titles will never be quite the same again.

At the moment, latency (more commonly referred to as 'lag' or 'ping') poses the biggest obstacle to games developers. Those of you who've played *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life* over the Net will be all too familiar with games that lurch along in fits and bursts and suffer curious side-effects where it feels as though your character is well beyond the legal limit to drive a car, let alone hold a sniper rifle. Click the mouse and the gun fires half a second later; jump to avoid someone's rocket and you end up a wet jigsaw of yourself on the balcony above. It's no fun.

But sign up to ADSL or Cable Modem and your troubles could be over. Both forms of connection allow permanent, unlimited access to the Internet – and at huge connection speeds. ADSL, for example, will be capable of 512Kbps downloads and 128Kbps uploads. Cable provides similar, if a little more variable, connection rates. In terms of file transfer, and assuming a suitably fast server, that sort of bandwidth should allow you to grab a 1Mb file in less than 20 seconds. Translate that to games, and suddenly you have the capacity to download entire new maps and levels in the blink of an eye. Play monster levels with



Rich arcade environments capable of supporting hundreds of players will soon be a reality. Pictured is *Quake III*.



Thought this class of visuals was a pipe dream? No longer. *Tribes 2* should coincide with the UK's biggest connectivity leap yet.



Lots of action needn't max out your line and slow things down. Enjoy the cool environments of *Daikatana* unhindered.

hundreds of players. Rich graphical environments with ambient sounds and complex animation. And, of course, higher bandwidth translates directly to lower latency, smoothing out gameplay and allowing you to walk and chew gum at the same time – smoothly, without stumbling or faltering.

It also means you'll be able to use Voice over IP (VoIP) products to talk to your fellow gamers without interrupting your current game. If you need help defending the blue flag in *Team Fortress Classic*, you'll simply yell *HELP!* and your team mates will hear your dulcet tones in real time – no more letting go of the mouse to type adrenalised gibberish ("ENMNEY INCMOJNMG TO FLGA!!!"). Current systems, such as *Roger Wilco* and *Battlefield Communicator*, do work – but on a 56.6Kbps modem the quality can be poor and the voice-data packets often cause the game you're playing to stutter as they up vital bandwidth.

"Both ADSL or Cable Modem allow permanent, unlimited access to the Internet – and at huge connection speeds"

VoIP is already being planned for, or is already an integrated part of, titles such as *FireTeam*, *Team Fortress 2* and *Tribes 2*. This should greatly enhance teamplay aspects, as people will be able to continue playing uninterrupted and communicate vital information just by moving their mouths.

THE FUTURE IS FULL

What is arguably the best online game of all time, *Ultima Online*, doesn't boast bandwidth hungry fast action or to-die-for graphics. This means that the future for *UO* centres around a massive influx of new characters and the evolution of new lands, new towns and new skills. People who were previously afraid of mortgage-like phone bills will now be able to join one of the most engrossing online experiences for a fixed price tag.

As from next Spring, anyone should be able to connect to Britannia and stay there for as long as they like. Since it's a Persistent State World (PSW), meaning it grows constantly both day and night, you'll be able to become a permanent feature. Your online persona will never be offline, and your fellow players will be able to see you dozing quietly in the room of an inn while you catch up on your email or put your feet up and watch the telly.

That said, what people are talking about right now is *Ultima Online 2*. Developed to take advantage of the very latest 3D graphics technology, it'll be something of a


Want to organise your team? Don't type it, say it. Here we see a group of players stalking around a *SWAT 3* level.

ONLINE ONLY: GAMES TO WATCH

Believe it or not, online gaming is still in its infancy. Developers have only just woken up from a ten-year-long slumber as to the possibilities of multiplayer mayhem over the Internet. Here we look at some of the titles you should keep an eye on over the next 12 months


Could the massive multiplayer world of *EverQuest* become more popular than *Ultima Online*?

EVERQUEST
www.everquest.com

Alongside *Ultima Online*, *EverQuest* is reckoned to be the best online RPG. Choose from 12 races, 14 classes, 40 unique skills; collect thousands of items, explore five continents and other dimensions and planes; complete quests and learn spells.


A mad, bad, online *X-COM*, *Fireteam* boasts a rapidly expanding user base.

FIRETEAM
www.fireteam.com

Voted Online Game of the Year by countless publications and websites, *FireTeam* continues to garner a massive amount of support from the online community. Essentially, it's a top-down strategy team game where you play as members of a SWAT squad.


If you're an *Ultima Online* fan, you should know not to let the crappy graphics distract you.

IRON WOLVES
www.iwwolfpack.com

For something different, give this top-rated multiplayer submarine simulation a whirl. Play as Commander of a U-Boat, Corvette, Tanker, or even a Destroyer. With the oceans soon to be populated by many more players, it'll become even more of a challenge.


Take on some serious gangsters in this online-only *SimCity* look-a-like.

LEGAL CRIME
www.byteenchanters.com

With the intense, sinister feel of the old *Bonnie and Clyde* movie, *Legal Crime* puts you in the middle of '20s Chicago. Build a sprawling crime empire, gain control of the city and crush the other rival mobs – all in real time over the Internet.


Little-known multiplayer, team-based tank blast *Tanarus* will leave you reeling.

TANARUS
tanarus.station.sony.com

Sony's first-person tank shooter is a real hoot – with lots of complex strategy, it should keep you occupied for hours. If you fancy a cross between *Team Fortress Classic*, *Battlezone* and *Tank Battle* on the old Atari 2600, *Tanarus* will be right up your alley.

gobsmacking leap forward from the chunky 2D visuals of the current *UO*. Details are still rather sketchy, but you can rest assured that, combined with the latest hardware, it'll be a must-have title for every RPG and strategy fan. There's even a rumour that high bandwidth users will be able to download chunks of the game 'on the fly', meaning that the universe will constantly shape and adapt when you download new scenery, new textures, updated AI routines and special effects the moment they become available on the master server.

THE FUTURE IS FAB

Dedicated services such as Wireplay and Barrysworld will no doubt cater for the new group of high bandwidth, low-ping ADSL and Cable users. This means that the ultimate gaming experience will be in point-to-point connections. In other words, you dial in direct and hook up to their servers without the need for your data packets to go bouncing around the Internet. This means that you'll get lag-free games *guaranteed* every time.

Of course, the possibilities stretch from here to eternity. Just as the Internet in general will benefit from faster, just plain *better* connection technologies, so will online gaming. And you can look forward to all this before the summer of next year. True, it's all down to BT to get their act together and roll out ADSL in good time, but rest assured it will happen – and there's always better offers from rival companies waiting in the wings. For example, check NTL's website for details of their £40 a month permanent cable access available to you today. PCZ

PC ZONE GAMES SERVER

Get in on the online action and cause some serious carnage



We do *Half-Life*. Do you?

Yes, folks, the *PC ZONE* Games Server is here to stay. Update your server lists in either *Half-Life* or *Team Fortress Classic* and get stuck into some serious online action. We'll be there from time to time to kick your arse, don't worry.

More information at www.sillyware.com/pcz

NEW WAYS TO GET CONNECTED

Fast access and unmetered calls are set to revolutionise the Internet and the future of online

Recent announcements from BT and Telewest will revolutionise the way everyone connects to the Internet. As from next Spring, the two telecommunications giants will no longer charge you by the minute to hook up to your ISP. Instead, you'll be charged a flat monthly rate for permanent access to the Internet, meaning you could dial on in the morning and disconnect last thing at night without having to pay a penny for the 15 or so hours you were on the phone. It's called *unmetered access*, and it's the way America has been working for years. Here we look at some of the ways you can get online, and, more importantly, stay online in early 2000.

UNMETERED CALLS



With unmetered access and a decent 56.6Kbps modem, you should find that the time you spend online is altogether less frantic. With round-the-clock connectivity at a single price tag, you can do whatever you like for as long as you like.

What it is

BT recently announced it would introduce flat fee, unmetered access to the Internet. According to the communications giant, their new 24/7 access tariffs would cost £34.99 a month; daytime access from Monday to Friday would cost £26.99, and weekend/evening access would cost £6.99. The Campaign for Unmetered Communication (CUT), who have been on BT's case for years, were overjoyed at the announcement, but made it clear that they thought the price was too high.

What we think

Forget the price for the moment at least, the idea is long overdue. It has been argued by many people that metering calls (ie the business of monitoring all communications with a view to charging you for them on a per-second basis) is actually more expensive than the call itself. In the past, hosting a local call was an expensive affair, with BT's old switch-based exchanges swallowing a fair amount of juice as they clunked, clicked and whirred. With the advent of all digital exchanges, though, running costs have dropped to near zero. So with a high-spec Hayes Accura, BT Home Highway or ISDN line, and for no more than £34.99 each month, you'll enjoy your online time more than ever before. But if you can afford it, and afford to wait, there's much higher bandwidth and faster rates just around the corner.

CABLE MODEM



Capable of up to 1.5Mbps download rates, cable modems match the power of commercial Internet lines. The downsides include bottlenecks at the exchange and a comparatively miserable upload speeds (ie sending data to a server).

What it is

A cable modem connects your PC to your ISP via a cable TV line. If you haven't got cable TV at home, or you're not in a cable area, you're out of luck. Cable modems cost around £150 (plus £20 installation) and are capable of downloading data at up to 1.5Mbps, around three times the rate of BT's proposed ADSL service, and more than 50 times the rate of a 28.8Kbps modem. Upload rates are a lot less impressive, ranging from a measly 28.8Kbps up to 768Kbps, depending on your provider.

What we think

Cable flies along at a decent rate, is hugely reliable and very cheap – typical costs are £40 a month for 24-hour, seven-day-a-week access, just like ADSL. It provides fast connections and, in almost all cases, you'll be very chuffed with it for gaming. However, one downside of the system is that the average cable exchange has around 30Mbps capacity. This means that, the more cable users you have in the area, the less bandwidth you have for your connection. ADSL has the capability to expand across the country without causing bottlenecks at every cable provider.

ADSL



ADSL should make a big impact on the UK Internet scene. Guaranteed rates and permanent connectivity mean you can join and leave games whenever you want, without any charge for the time you spend online.

What it is

Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) is a new communications technology that BT has been testing for some time. Download streams for the new ADSL service will be 512Kbps, around ten times the capacity of a 56.6Kbps modem, and typical upload rates will be around the 128Kbps mark. End-user price tag is predicated to be around £50 per month.

ADSL has several benefits. First, it uses regular copper-wire phone lines for both voice *and* data transmittal. This means you won't need to have BT guys crawling over the outside of your home or up trees in your front garden. Second, it provides permanent access: once an ADSL line is live, it provides a constant data stream to the other end. Thirdly, it can provide up to 8Mbps bandwidth, and isn't prone to bottlenecks as is the case with cable-based equipment in areas with high user-to-modem ratios.

What we think

Bliss. ADSL provides round-the-clock access to the Internet without the need to connect and disconnect. If you want to pick up your mail, your PC will already be online and thus will simply exchange data with your mail server and stay online. So you could, for example, choose to check for new messages every 30 seconds and it won't ever cost you more than £50 a month. You can even host Internet games on your machine, with people connecting direct to you for their fun. So before buying a new modem, check with BT to see if your local phone exchange will be offering the ADSL service.

BOOKMARKS

Get unlimited online access

www.bt.com
British Telecom makes £100 a second. Tick, tick, tick

www.telewest.com
Telewest don't. But that doesn't mean they're crap

www.keynote.com/measures/dsl/
ADSL versus Cable Modem comparative performance chart

www.cablemodemhelp.com
Cable Modem Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

www.adsl.com/faq.html
ADSL Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

www.ntl.co.uk/cablemodems/
NTL's unlimited access cable modem service

www.uo.com
Perhaps the best online game ever? Sign up and decide

www.barrysworld.co.uk
May we introduce Barry the talkative Time Sprout?

www.wireplay.co.uk
Connect direct to Wireplay for super smooth gaming bliss

Internet a

through



Oh, and it play



Not only is Dreamcast the most powerful console ever with a whopping great 128-bit processor, it's also the first with on-line capabilities. All you need is a TV and a phone to surf

SEGA™

nd e-mail

your T.V.



s games as well.

the web and e-mail from the comfort of your armchair. Plug and play – it's as simple as that.

R.R.P.£199.99. Free unlimited internet access charged at local call rate. Sega & Dreamcast are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Sega Enterprises, Ltd.

Dreamcast™

Up to 6 billion players

www.dreamcast-europe.com

Dreamarena

PC ZONE REVI

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first –

THE PC ZONE GAMES SYSTEM

This is the machine we use to review new titles on. Our reviewers also use older machines to get an impression of gaming in the 'real' world, but this is what we currently consider the best 'value-for-money' set up. As games become more demanding, the specs will change to reflect that

At the heart of the machine is a 600MHz AMD Athlon processor. These babies are seriously scorching, optimised for 3D applications, so first-person shooters fly like you wouldn't believe. Faster Athlons are now available, but at the present prices, this is probably the best value for money of the family. The system bus runs at 200MHz (er… fast) so basically the whole thing is like a supercar with no brake pedal.

Supporting the processor is a MaxiGamer Xentor 32 from Guillemot, purveyors of all things graphic-y. Based on the TNT2 chipset, these RAM-packed beasties are designed to cope with the polygons, textures and special effects that those game developers insist on chucking at the screen. Guillemot have a new GeForce 256-based card in the offing, which we're hoping to upgrade to soon.

Pionex have supplied the cases and 128Mb of PC100 memory for the motherboard. For gaming, especially with RAM prices as they are at the time of writing, 128Mb is the optimum amount. The cases have plenty of room for expansion without taking up excessive space. Nifty floppy slot as well…

Hard drive services are provided by the stunning 7,200 rpm, 20Gb Maxtor DiamondMax Plus (from the 5120 family of drives). It's large and fast: plenty of room for full installs and quick to load games when you want to play them.

Sound services are supplied by VideoLogic. The SonicVortex 2 card is a PCI device featuring Aureal A3D 2.0, ideal for gamers. The latest drivers are stunning, using the card's own chip to reduce the processing overhead on the CPU when calculating 3D audio. Aureal's API now handles not only sounds themselves but also their reflections: as you approach a doorway, you can hear sounds from the room reflected into the corridor. Immersive stuff.

VideoLogic also supply speakers from the superb Scirocco range. We use primarily Crossfires for gaming – they may seem expensive, but you get twice the quality you pay for. Four satellite speakers and a humungous subwoofer give pinpoint accuracy for 3D audio and bass meaty enough for the rumbliest explosions. We also use other speakers from the range (the original Scirocco and new Scirocco Pro) for sound card testing.

Guillemot's DVD Theater setup provides not only the ability to load games quickly, but also to watch DVD movies (essential for reviewing games – not) with its bundled MPEG decoder card.

Peripherals are supplied by Microsoft, from USB mice (top-notch for first-person shooters) through the full force-feedback monty – joysticks and driving wheels – to the ubiquitous Sidewinder gamepads.

Last but certainly not least are headphones from Philips (when the others in the office are suffering from Scirocco overkill) and fabulous 17inch Brilliance monitors (107Bs). If you're used to the cheaper monitors typically bundled with new PCs, the crispness and stability of the image displayed on these comes as quite a shock.



REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

We at *ZONE* pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our writers are the most experienced and talented reviewers in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre and they won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We also want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we've have our Feedback section on page 118. This is where you get the opportunity to put your point of view into *PC ZONE*. If you've got a comment to make, then we want to hear it.



CHECK THE SPECS!

The standard spec machine these days is a P233 with 32Mb of memory – but before buying any game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the technical specs on packaging can sometimes be a little optimistic to say the least, make sure you check out the 'We say' bit in our tech specs box at the start of reviews. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, then we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call

Acclaim 0171 344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** 01604 232200 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315550 • **Eidos Interactive** 0181 636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01753 549442 • **Empire Interactive** 0208 343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 0208 222 9700 •**Hasbro Interactive** 0181 569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 0171 551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0181 242 1000 • **Mindscape** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 0171 405 1777 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 722900 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 0181 944 9300 **Zablac** 01626 332233

REVIEWS

we'll tell you which games you've got to buy, and which you've got to avoid

REVIEWS



84 QUAKE III ARENA



88 LE MANS 24 HOUR



90 PLANESCAPE TORMENT



92 INTERSTATE '82



95 H&D: FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

PC ZONE CLASSIC 90-100% Here at *ZONE* we score every game out of 100. If a game receives a score of 90 or above, it is awarded the *PC ZONE* Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not a fan of the genre.

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED 80-89% Games that score 80-89% get the *PC ZONE* Recommended award. Games in this category are excellent examples of their type and, if you're a fan of the genre, they're well worth buying.

70-79% Any games that score between 70-79% has just missed a recommended award but don't ignore them. The score is well above average and that means you're getting a great title that's worth the investment if you're a fan of the genre.

50-69% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-49% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre, or you happen to see it at a reduced price.

PC ZONE PANTS 0-19% Games that score under 20% should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating, and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged, then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.

PC ZONE HALL OF FAME

These are the games that currently score 90% or above and so are deemed to be *PC ZONE* classics



HALF-LIFE



AGE OF EMPIRES II



SYSTEM SHOCK 2



GRIM FANDANGO



COLIN MCRAE



FALCON 4



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 99/00



ULTIMA ONLINE

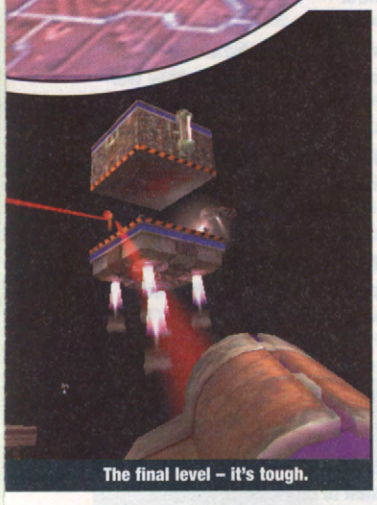


UNREAL TOURNAMENT

QUAKE III ARENA



Flags in space – one of the four CTF levels.



The final level – it's tough.

★ £44.99 • Activision • Out now

Fast and intense, this game redefines hardcore. *Dave Woods* is convinced there's nothing else that comes close to its heart-pounding speed and action



Fat Lucy gets up close and personal with some unwilling opponents.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** As long as you've got a PII-350 and a decent graphics card you're laughing, but ISDN or cable modem if you can afford it

Doom, *Quake* and *Trinity*. That was the way it was supposed to be, but id Software dropped a bombshell in 1998 when they announced that Trinity was no more. The excuse that was trotted out was that they wanted to concentrate on the multiplayer side of the game – what they saw as the core ingredient and the action that hardcore gamers were after.

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Quake III Arena is the result, and if you've played the test or demo versions of it, you'll know what to expect. id have honed deathmatch down to the basics, and if you like your action fast, frantic and totally reaction-dependent, then this is the game you've been praying for.

Despite the fact that it's best played against real people, *Quake III Arena* isn't strictly multiplayer-only. In addition to being able to practice on any level in straight deathmatch or team modes, and capture the flag across four specially-designed levels, *Arena* also provides a 'tournament' with 30 different AI bots to fight against, spread across eight different tiers containing 26 unique levels. Some are small and self-contained, others are more complex architectural affairs. Progress further and you find a few experimental platform-driven arenas packed with huge areas of space ready to swallow you up if you make a false move or get too close to the fallout from a rocket blast.

WE ARE HARDCORE!

You can't progress until you've cleared each tier, but you can play any of the levels in any order and on any of the different skill levels: I Can Win, Bring It On, Hurt Me Plenty, Hardcore and Nightmare. This is a definite nod towards the new player, but it only serves to take out any sense of progression. In *Unreal Tournament*, you have to face ever-increasing levels of skill, and the end result is that you get better at playing the game, while in *Quake III* you can start off on nightmare level, get panned and keep dropping until you sail through every level on I Can Win.

What you should do is play on Hurt Me Plenty. This poses a challenge for the competent player – and if you find you're winning fairly easily, you can always up the ante. If you can beat the one-on-one levels that complete each tier on Hardcore, you can join our team any day of the week. If you're not good enough for the Hurt Me setting, you should just set up individual practice levels with bots, and go at it until you're ready to take on the best id can throw at you.

As with *Unreal Tournament*, the AI is superb, with bots picking their own weapons of choice, and quickly turning on you if you start to snipe with the railgun. Each bot is also supposed to have its own personality, and this does become evident, although only in minor ways. Some characters play very

SECOND OPINION



MARK 'BENNY' HILL

Despite being hooked on the multiplayer test demo, I was quite sceptical when I saw Dave playing the single-player game. It didn't last long, though, and I was completely hooked once I tried it myself. Having said that, anyone who doesn't have a LAN connection and plenty of friends to play with will only get half of the experience. The lack of single-player team play means that *Unreal Tournament* just about edges it.



The Germans aren't going to like that, are they?

To appreciate the reflective armour, you need to see this bloke running around. It looks awesome.

"If you're not looking for a single-player, story-driven extravaganza, and you're happier playing with others than alone, then this is the first-person's finest hour"

defensively, backing off and shooting, others get in your face, even if you're armed with a rocket launcher. Wound bots and they run off and seek health, and even on the most complex levels, they can navigate their way through the various platforms and jump pads without committing suicide – something you won't be able to boast until you've played each level a fair few times.

But, as far as team play goes, the bots in *UT* just about shade it. They play in a more realistic way, and we never noticed patterns of behaviour being repeated.

CHECK THE VIEW

Graphically, *Quake III* is spot on. If you've played the test or demo versions, you'll know how slick the engine is and how much better the character animation is over any of its rivals – *UT* included. What you won't have seen are some of the extra characters included in the full package, including the eyeball on legs, and the generous waistline that's attached to Tank Junior. There's also an updated *Doom* character, and each one has its own sounds and animations. Some of the later levels also show off the infamous curved architecture to the full. And if you think that *Quake III* is still too dull, then you should check out some of the lighting effects that were missing from the test version.

There's no denying that *Quake III* is a superb game. Ultimately, what you want to know is whether you should spend your money on this or *Unreal Tournament*. The cop-out answer is that you should buy both. Despite the similarities between the two games, there are a lot of differences.

Unreal Tournament offers more depth of play and is also superior in other ways: the alternate fire mode, cool-looking weapons and the sniper rifle all add up to a superb experience. It might not have come up with anything that hasn't been played on the Internet before, but Assault, Domination, Last Man Standing and InstaGib all offer more variety than *Quake III*'s straight deathmatch or CTF play. However, out of all *Unreal*'s variations, straight deathmatch and CTF are the only ones you're likely to come back to again and again, with the exception

FEELING HORNY?

Tool up and take on the Horned Reaper

There are loads of characters to choose from in *Quake III*, but how about this: someone at Bullfrog has designed a Horny plug-in which enables you to select and play as the Horned Reaper from *Dungeon Keeper 2*. Not only that, but it was sent to id, who duly animated and put sound to the finished model. Very cool.



Is that a Bullfrog in your pocket?

SPEED FREAK

Quake III is the fastest deathmatch game you can buy

Gone are the cumbersome lifts and ladders from the previous version – in their place are Bounce Pads and Accelerator Pads. Bounce Pads propel you straight up in the air, Accelerator Pads throw you in a predetermined direction. When you're up in the air you can control the movement of your character and direct him/her wherever you want to go. The combination of the two means that you can always follow your opponent without having to wait ten minutes for the lift to come back down. It might take a bit of getting used to, but it's a superb addition. Believe it.

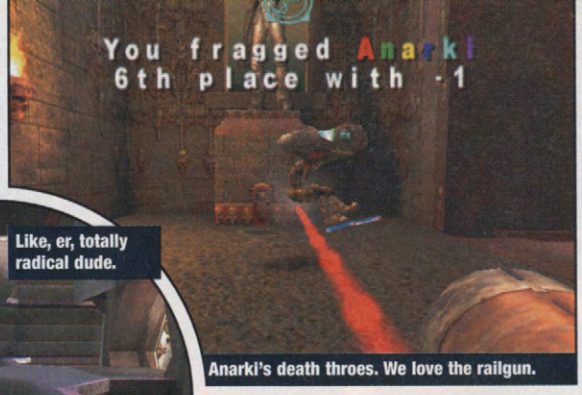

Quake III piles the gore on.


Back flipping away from the BFG.


Reactions. That's what it's about.


If that doesn't inspire you, nothing will.





Anarki's death throes. We love the railgun.



QIII doesn't like outdoor scenes, but there are a few wide-open spaces.



If you could choose one weapon to take to a desert island...

A QUICK PICK-ME-UP

***Quake III's* new power-ups and storable items**

FLIGHT PACK



Contrary to another magazine's early exclusive, id haven't dropped the Flight Pack from the finished game. It crops up in multiplayer mode, and it's a great way to avoid jumping from platform to platform.

TELEPORTER



Pick up one of these and you can store it to use in a sticky situation. Hit your activate key and you're instantly transported to a random area of the map.

REGENERATOR



The business. Grab this and charge: your health and armour gradually increase until they reach 200 per cent. You can still take damage, but if you hide you recover quickly.

BATTLE SUIT



Fancy taking a dip in lava? Just get one of these on first. The Battle Suit also protects you from slime, drowning and other hostile conditions, including splash damage from weapons.

of the superb InstaGib Mutator.

Quake III, on the other hand, is faster, and the engine is much slicker. And only one game has the railgun. If you like your action fast and intense, this is definitely the one to go for. There's nothing else that comes close for speed and heart-pounding action.

If, however, you want more depth in a single-player game and you don't mind your action marginally slower, *UT* is your baby.

WOT, NO BUGS?!

But, aside from the fact that *Quake III* is a bloody good game, there are other issues which should be addressed. Despite having played the game 24/7, we haven't found any bugs. And after some of the trash we've had to review recently, this smells sweet. How have id been able to do it? Easy. For the past six months the whole world has effectively been beta testing *Quake III*, and at the same time having a laugh for free. If other developers took the hint, we might not have to put up with bug-ridden atrocities or engines that can only generate 5fps as soon as they leave the developer's machine.

Despite this praise there are two big problems with the game. To play *Quake III Arena* as it's supposed to be played, you need access to a network or a fast Internet connection. You can play single- player until you're blue in the face, but it can't touch the thrill of going online and smacking real humans, especially if you know them personally. Don't bleat to us about having a Freeserve account, because you know it's not going to work. It might not cost you any money bar the price of a local phone call, but play *Quake III Arena* through Freeserve's choked servers and you get your arse kicked by that old adversary, lag.

We also tried it with a faster pay account, and although it works brilliantly for a first release and the ping times are better than any other game on the shelves, the game is still too fast to work adequately through a 56K modem. The same criticism can be levelled at any FPS, but as this game is the fastest, the ping times are all the more crucial. ISDN, cable connections or the promised utopia of ADSL will solve the problem for good and usher in a whole new era of gaming, but unless you've got a cellar full of change, you're not going to be able to afford the exorbitant charges.

"For the past six months the whole world has effectively been beta testing *Quake III*, and at the same time having a laugh for free"

SINGLE SADNESS

The second major criticism we've got of *Quake III Arena* is the lack of a single-player game. If it had a storyline to match the engine, we'd probably be looking at the best game ever. As it is, the *Quake III* engine is likely to be licensed out by the bucketload, and sooner or later someone's going to come up with the next *Half-Life*. We'll have id to thank when that happens, but it smacks of laziness and penny-pinching that they won't do it themselves. They say they haven't got the time or the resources to develop a mission-based game alongside the engine, but that smells of cow dirt. Are they trying to tell us that with the amount of cash they've got rotting in the bank they couldn't draft in the best storytellers and mission-based level designers that money can buy? Because if they are, we're not buying it.

But forget about these niggles. If you're not looking for a single-player, story-driven extravaganza, and you're happier playing with others than alone, then this is the first-person's finest hour. No other game delivers the feeling that *Quake III* does: the feeling you get when you're being chased, with your last few points of health, and you snatch the railgun, hit an accelerator ramp and spin in mid-air to nail your assailant between the eyes. This is what *Quake III* is all about. That and grabbing your rocket launcher, immersing yourself in the cool blue of Quad Damage and going on a rampage, clearing the arena of all and sundry – twice if anyone's foolish enough to

SECOND OPINION



CHRIS ANDERSON

I never had high hopes for *Quake III*. It always sounded like it was going to be *Quake II* without the single-player game. But having played it, I have to admit I'm hugely impressed with the deathmatch levels. They are easy to pick up and play and so will appeal to gamers new to multi-player shoot-outs, perhaps more so than *Unreal Tournament* which is hectic from start to finish. Having said that, I still prefer *UT*'s colourful graphics and the weapons are 'cool and neat' as many Americans will no doubt attest. My verdict? *UT* wins, but not by much – in fact, it would be fair to say it couldn't have been closer.

ALSO CONSIDER

UNREAL TOURNAMENT (GT Interactive, £34.99) This is the other *big* title doing the business at the moment. As good as *Quake III* in lots of respects, and better in others. Slower, with more depth and excellent bots. ***PCZ* #81, 90%**

HALF-LIFE (Sierra, £34.99) Until someone takes the *Quake III* engine and produces the next masterpiece, this is the single-player game to buy. Our game of the millennium and deservingly so. ***PCZ* #71, 95%**

HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE (Sierra, £19.99) If you finished our game of the millennium, don't worry, because the official mission pack is here and it's almost as good as the original. Play the other side and relive the experience. ***PCZ* #85, 85%**


Klesk – one-on-one. Come on!



Impressive – railgun sniping.



Crash has crashed and burned.




More action than your average John Woo film – and twice the fun.

respawn before your 20 seconds of fame have elapsed.

Some people may disagree with the fact that we've given *UT* one per cent more, but the fact is *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III* are both superb and the gaming community is probably going to be split down the middle when it comes to preference. The fact that you're spoiled for choice is superb and remember, if you want speed, *Quake III* is still the fastest and best pure multiplayer deathmatch game you can buy. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS The best 3D engine ever • Super-fast pure deathmatching • Loads of characters • Excellent AI • Superb level design

DOWNERS No single-player missions • You need a *fast* Internet access or network to get the most out of it

89 A vital purchase and the fastest game money can buy

SECOND OPINION



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

***Quake III Arena* is truly a beautiful thing. Detailed architecture, fluid character movement, fast relentless action – the purest deathmatch experience you'll ever have. Personally speaking, though, the game lacks variety – especially in single-player mode. If you've never been a *Quake* fan, there'll be little here to convert you. *Unreal Tournament* is certainly a safer choice and, if you're going to buy one of these titles, make it that one.**

NO HOLDS BARRED

A first-person shooter is only as good as the weapons it leaves lying around. *Quake III* doesn't disappoint. Did you really think it would?

GAUNTLET



It's almost impossible to execute a kill with this glove-cum-saw blade, which is why you're awarded a gauntlet medal for each kill you achieve with it. Humiliation booms out of the recipient's speakers.

MACHINE GUN



Sprays bullets around with gay abandon. It's no good against any of the bigger weapons, so you should only chase someone with this if you know they're short on health.

RAILGUN



The weapon of champions. There are loads of weapons in *Quake III* but this is the one that counts. Master the railgun and you're a master of the arena, it's as simple as that. There's no sniper rifle, but you can use zoom mode with any of the weapons. It's most effective with the railgun, but it's a clumsy alternative to training yourself to pick out the spot between the eyes at a hundred metres. Use the zoom, and a practised railgunner who doesn't will beat you every time.

SHOTGUN



Disappointing after the *Quake II* favourite. It still does the damage if you can get in close but it's useless as a long-range weapon.

PLASMA GUN



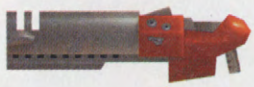
Probably the best *Doom* weapon makes a welcome return to the party. Lethal at a distance or in close. Just watch you don't melt yourself.

GRENADE LAUNCHER



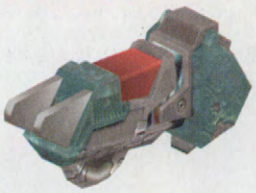
Someone chasing you? Don't want them on your tail? Just turn a corner, whip out your grenade launcher, run backwards and leave a few head-mashers in your wake.

ROCKET LAUNCHER



The weapon of choice for most people. It still feels right – and although there's less rocket jumping in *Quake III*, you're still going to have this in your hand most of the time.

LIGHTNING GUN



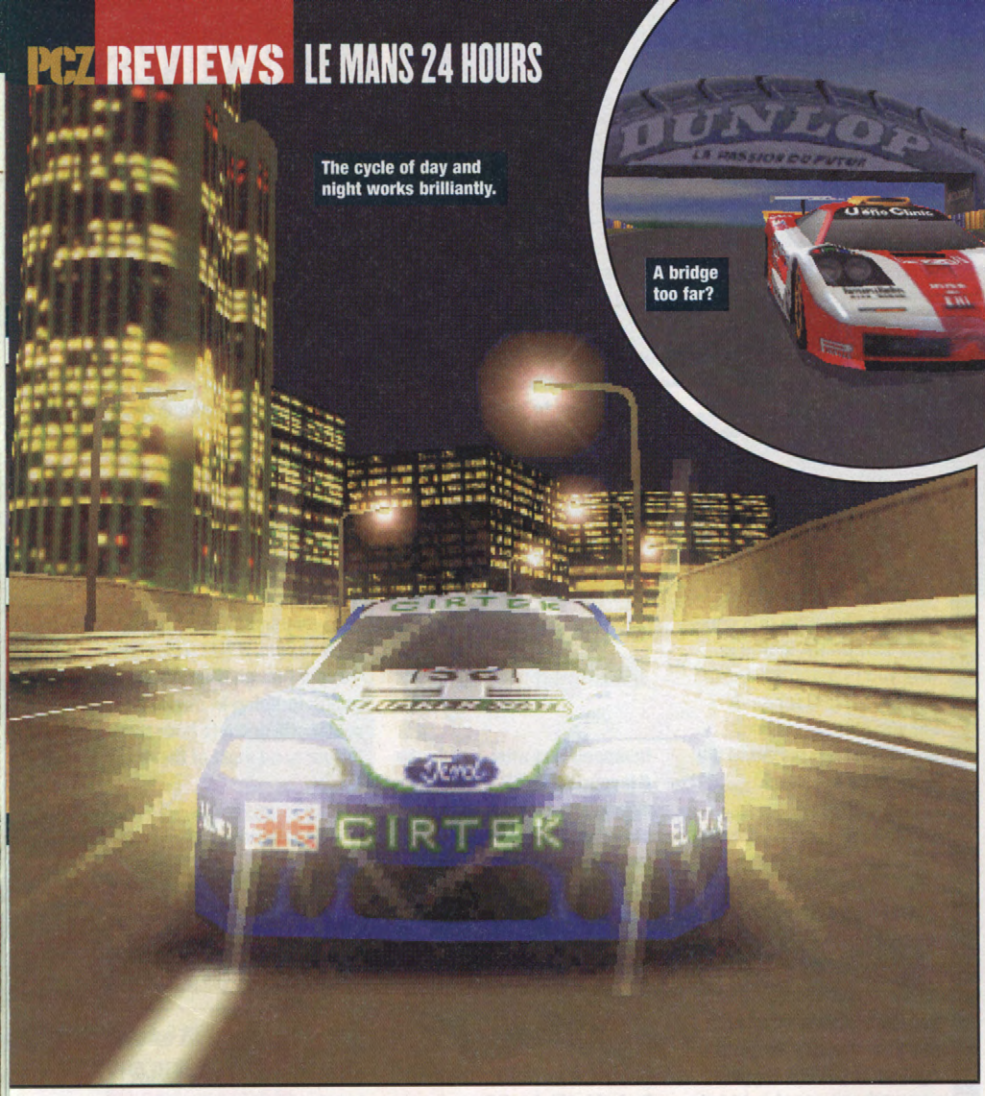
It looks distinctly unimpressive in your hands but it unleashes a frazzling bolt of lightning that you can keep trained on your opponents. Practise is the key here, but bots are deadly so try to keep them away from it.

BFG 10K



It's not an area-effect weapon any more, which is a shame. But if you can hit your opponents with the deadly plasma bolts they'll die in pain. Hard to find and very easy to use.





The cycle of day and night works brilliantly.

A bridge too far?



Cars emit a suitably throaty roar, although you'll have to take our word for it.



Due to the manufacturers being precious, cars can't show damage or roll over.

LE MANS 24 HOURS

★ £39.99 • Infogrames • Out now

***Steve Hill* has actually been to Le Mans, which isn't why we gave him this**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D Accelerator card **WE SAY** A P450 with a 12Mb 3D card does the trick

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

A car race that lasts for an entire day might sound like the dullest thing on earth – and by and large it is. The Le Mans 24-Hour event is inordinately tedious – an experience made bearable only by large quantities of alcohol, an array of life-threatening fairground attractions, and sporadic sightings of the near-legendary Hawaiian Tropic girls. As for the race itself, the initial flurry of the start soon gives way to lap after lap of monotony, with the drama that darkness brings tempered by the fact that it becomes even harder to follow.

At no point does anyone really have a clue what's going on, and ultimately you might as well be listening to it on the radio in the comfort of your own home. The actual finish is more of a blessed relief than a genuine celebration, and most spectators return home with a distinct feeling of gloom. Not great, then.

As opposed to the game which, as the number in the corner confirms, is highly recommended for purchase. Unlike the race, it's an enjoyable and exciting experience that holds your attention throughout and leaves you hungry for more. So how have they gone and done that? Well, firstly, you don't have to go to France. And secondly, it doesn't have to take all day, although this isn't out of the question.

PROPER

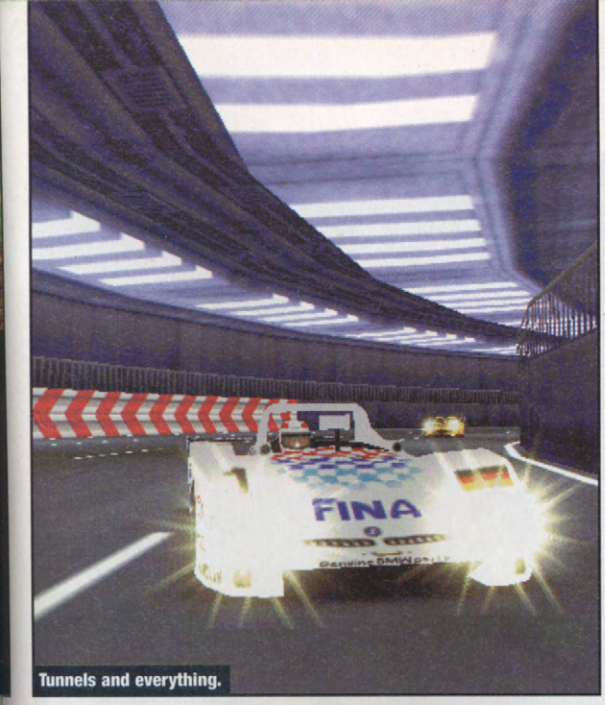
Le Mans 24 Hours is what is known in the trade as a 'proper' racing game. That is, you actually have to have some semblance of skill to succeed, or even to stay on the track. It's not just a case of holding down the accelerator and sliding around at your leisure, as tracks have to be learned, brakes have to be used, and manoeuvres executed to perfection. And it's all the better for it.

To set anything like a decent time, you have to be absolutely on the money for the entire lap. One injudicious stab of the brakes can send you west, undoing all your previous hard work. This really is seat-of-the-pants stuff, particularly in the heat of a race, and individual skirmishes can last for several laps. There is a real feeling of being involved in a race, and seeing the flicker from the headlights of the car behind is enough to have your sphincter contracting in an irregular fashion.

While not quite matching *Grand Prix Legends* levels of difficulty, *Le Mans* is a slippery little beast to pin down, and initial attempts will have you grinding your teeth in frustration as you slither your way to last place. It's the challenge that makes it so rewarding, though – and *Sega Rally* this isn't, with powerslides costing valuable seconds as opposed to gaining them. Although it's more than worth sticking with, as the rewards are manifold, and clinching your first championship points, for instance, provides a moment of celebration.

OPTIONS

You want options? *Le Man 24 Hours* has more options than any man could reasonably expect. The arcade challenges are probably the best place to start, offering a chance to get used to the handling and the tracks. And two proper championships are also available, namely sprint and endurance, the latter often necessitating pit stops. Rather than simply selecting your favourite-coloured car, the championships work in a unique fashion, with manufacturers approaching you to drive their vehicles. Clearly, as a rookie, only the most desperate will offer you a

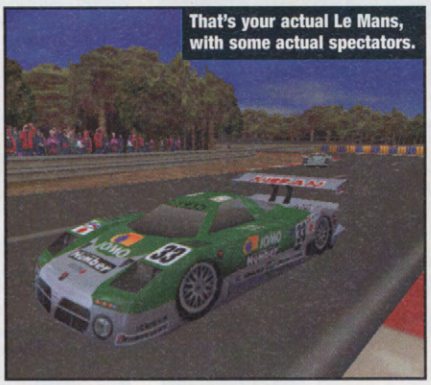


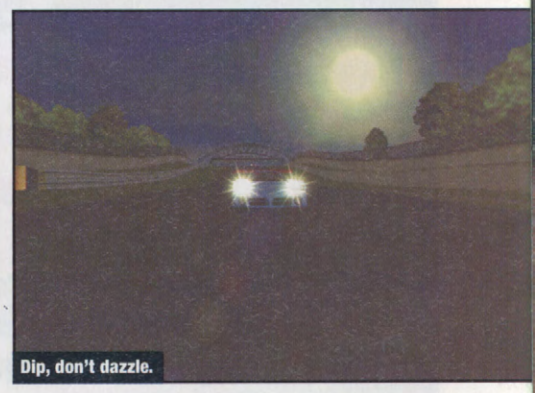
Tunnels and everything.



That's a well-buffed helmet.


Still no sign of the Hawaiian Tropic girls.


That's your actual Le Mans, with some actual spectators.


Dip, don't dazzle.

drive, but if you manage to put in a few decent performances the big boys will inevitably start hovering. And if you're having a decent season, it's possible to have four or five offers on the table. Before you make your decision, you can even test the prospective cars to see if you fancy them. Holding out for the best drive is one ploy, although it's often worth taking what's there, as offers can be withdrawn as quickly as they are made. This pseudo-career mode works extremely well, letting you cut your teeth on the slower cars before moving up the ranks. While hardly rocket science, its simple inclusion adds a huge amount of depth and incentive to the game.

24-HOUR PARTY PEOPLE

We still haven't mentioned the Le Mans section. But, even without it, this would be an excellent game, but the inclusion of the 24-hour race elevates it to the status of something you should seriously think about buying. Playable over 12 minutes, 24 minutes, one hour, two hours, or – yes – 24 hours, this is the *pièce de résistance* of the game, recreating the event in some style. Even over shorter periods, the cycle of night and day works brilliantly, with some real drama kicking in as the sun sets and the lights come on. Fuel levels and tyres become crucial, with weather often affecting your race plan. It's certainly a commitment, and while we've yet to take on the full 24 hours, the one-hour option proved perfectly playable.

"This is seat-of-the-pants stuff, particularly in the heat of the race, and individual skirmishes can last for several laps"

Le Mans might be just another racing game, but it's one that you will return to time and again. For those without regular employment, it can go a long way towards bridging the gap between instalments of *The Jerry Springer Show*. And you can't ask for much more than that. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Superb driving model • Loads of options • Challenging yet rewarding

DOWNERS No visible damage to cars • Commentary from TV's Tiff Needell • Bland French scenery

83 Twenty-four carat

ALSO CONSIDER

TOCA 2 (Codemasters, £14.99) Extreme attention to detail make this one for car buffs everywhere. *PCZ #76, 82%*

NEED FOR SPEED ROAD CHALLENGE (Electronic Arts, £39.99) A host of authentic vehicles, and some major law-evading action. *PCZ #80, 76%*

BREAKNECK (THQ, £29.99) Extremely fast, but a little cartoony for some tastes. *PCZ #78, 72%*

MOTORHEAD (Gremlin Interactive, £39.99) Old but gold, this is still worth a look. *PCZ #63, 75%*



The idyllic English countryside. Lush green fields, grazing sheep and lots of fresh air...



The monsters' union meets every Friday in *Planescape*.



Down in the mortuary the graphics are as cool as the corpses.

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

£39.99 • Interplay • Out Now

In this RPG from the makers of *Baldur's Gate*, you get to play a character more dead than alive. *Andrew Wright* was the perfect choice

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 MMX or better Memory 32Mb of RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb video card, 650Mb hard disk space **SUPPORTS** DirectX, EAX sound **WE SAY** Pentium II 300 or better with 64Mb RAM essential, 2Gb of hard disk space

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Baldur's Gate, the surprise RPG hit of 1999, offered a glimmer of hope for frustrated role-playing gamers fed up with the standard PC adventure game fare, with its two-dimensional bitmapped monsters and two-dimensional blundering plots. Developers Black Isle had cracked it, with a fluid plot, wide choice of party members and hundreds of screens full of monsters and magic.

To the hardcore pen-and-paper brigade, it was just basic hack-and-slash stuff, but to those with a hankering for a good Dungeons & Dragons-style adventure, it was something else. The good news is that Black Isle's next title, *Planescape: Torment*, makes *Baldur's Gate* look like a re-run of a '70s soap.

TSR, publishers of the original D&D rules, provide several different campaign settings for fantasy RPG fans. Forgotten Realms – as used in *Baldur's Gate* – is the archetypal fantasy world where magic users, clerics and fighters take on elves, goblins and dragons. And always win.

Planescape is another, but this time it's an angst-ridden world centred on Sigil, a city full of portals to different planes of existence. As settings go, it's an intensely atmospheric, doom-laden and very adult world, strictly for the die-hard pen-and-paper brigade. An understanding of alignment and the different factions in society is just as important as weapon skills and hit points.

CHANGING THE RULES

Torment takes place in this decaying *Planescape* universe but, while it uses the same graphics engine as *Baldur's Gate*, albeit radically improved, and the same D&D-derived rules, it's a totally different game. Everything has changed, from the plot to the whole look and feel.

In *Torment* you take on the role of an immortal amnesiac human being, the Nameless One. You've just been resurrected on a mortuary slab and, while you've no memory of how you ended up here, it quickly becomes clear that it isn't the first time you've been there.

Torment reflects the *Planescape* setting wonderfully well. The graphics are chilling and broody, especially the indoor scenes and the mortuary. The scenery itself is much more complex than in *BG*, thanks to the upgraded engine, with plenty of overhead structures, animated objects and some massive monsters like demons and golems, each several times the size of a human. The characters are all beautifully-animated with dozen of different routines for handling each weapon or object. For example, after a fight, your hero will hoist his warhammer over his shoulder while other characters will sheath swords and so on. The spell animations are nothing short of spectacular, and with somewhere near a hundred to choose from, you're unlikely to get tired of them too quickly.

Despite these entirely pre-rendered backgrounds, the character animation can be a little jerky on a minimum spec machine, especially when there are more than a handful of NPCs in play and some locations can get a little confusing when the overhead structures obscure the background. Otherwise the scenery is magnificent.

USE AND ABUSE

The user interface is different to *BG*'s with more actions more readily available, although some things like the quick weapon and spell slots aren't nearly so easy to access without keyboard shortcuts. As well as the standard character information bar along the bottom of the screen, a single right mouse click brings up a second floating toolbox from which you can quickly choose which skills or items to use in any situation.

Because *Planescape: Torment* is such a huge and extremely complicated adventure, it's vital to be able to keep track of what's going on. Your 'journal' is automatically updated when you meet interesting characters or take on new quests, and they're all recorded for posterity so that if you forget who someone is, a quick browse through your journal will tell you. There's even an index of names and player characters. More importantly, you can also update your own maps by adding notes and comments, something you'll have to get into the habit of doing if you want to progress.

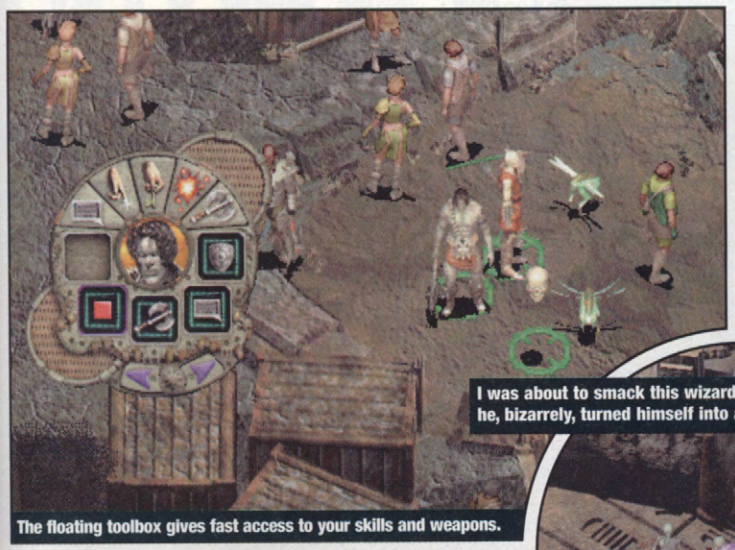
ON A ROLE

Torment offers a radically new and intriguing method of character development. Instead of deciding what character you want to play, your character develops according to how you play the game. Okay, you still allocate points to the six main D&D character abilities or 'stats', but where you go from there depends as much on your playing style as anything else. In *Torment* your character improves his skills by using them. Sneak around a lot and you'll become a better thief. Thunder into situations with your fists – or any other weapon – and your character will become a hard-nosed bruiser that other people step quickly around.

The clever bit is that your character's personality really does make a difference to the game's outcome as the people you meet and interact with will treat you differently according to the



That's you, that is.

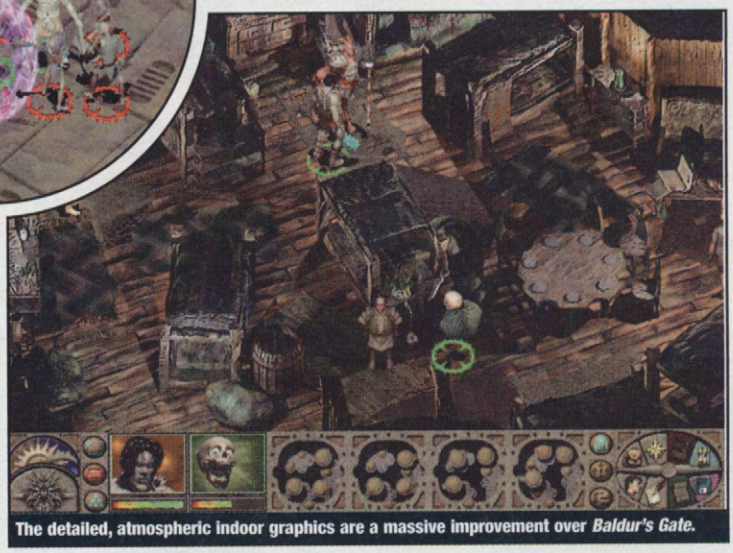

The floating toolbox gives fast access to your skills and weapons.


Now how did that dispel bats spell go again?


I was about to smack this wizard geezer when he, bizarrely, turned himself into an Easter egg.



A paltry collection, but you will come across more inviting items to beg, steal or borrow.


The detailed, atmospheric indoor graphics are a massive improvement over *Baldur's Gate*.

way you play. If you have a low or modest charisma and you threaten the individuals you come across instead of charming them, you'll often get no co-operation at all. On the other hand, some characters will be so scared of you that they'll tell you all as soon as you approach them.

I played one game as a thug with average stats – moderate charisma, strength, etc – and found it ten times harder to persuade a particular non-player character to give up an item. And in a later game, as an intelligent would-be magic user with higher charisma, I had the item in my backpack after two or three rounds of dialogue. This has the same dialogues, different options but it's always amusing, intelligent and, for a change, superbly well-written.

You can have up to five others in your party and they will all behave in character. In other RPGs and games like *BG*, if two party members didn't get on they would simply refuse to join up. In *Torment*, they will bicker, fight, prevent you questioning a third party, or even go berserk and attack people you want to be friends with. You don't even know their class or alignment at first – all ground-breaking stuff where computer RPGs are concerned.

FINAL FANTASY

Baldur's Gate's 'traditional' fantasy setting and logical if rather linear plot made for a good adventure game, but lacks any real role-playing element. *Torment* reverses this completely. There's even more emphasis on plot, but the accent is on role-playing and not hack-and-slash gold-grabbing.

Where *Baldur's Gate* was ghosts and goblins, swordplay and spells, *Planescape* is another world completely. There's a real sense of doom and decay, yet the characters still seem alive and real, even in a world of undead monsters, vile creatures from the other planes, and cleverly-created player and non-player characters, each with their own axes to grind.

The *Planescape* world won't be to everyone's taste but it does provide a rich role-playing environment where nothing is quite what it seems and nobody is really on your side. There are no knights in shining armour in *Planescape*, just animated corpses, streets full of thugs, thieves and villains every which way you turn. Londoners will feel right at home.

"There's a real sense of doom and decay, yet the characters still seem alive and real, even in a world of undead monsters"

There's no multiplayer option in *Torment* either, although this isn't really surprising, given the nature of the game and a main plot based on a single character. Other human party members would just get in the way. More to the point, the non-player characters and other prospective party members offer such intelligent dialogues and actions that there'd be no real gain in adding multiplayer support.

THE END IS NIGH

The character descriptions and dialogues are well-written and cleverly handled, and you're offered enough options when talking to them that the 'right' question or answer isn't always immediately obvious. True, the second or third time you play the game, you know what to say to get your experience points, although you're still never quite sure whether any particular character is offering a nice easy quest or whether he or she is simply a pointless red herring. It's not perfect but, in many ways, *Torment* is still light-years ahead of other RPGs.

Without a doubt, this is the best true role-playing game on PC to date. Its level of complexity and intelligent plot knocks *Baldur's Gate* into oblivion and gives RPG fans a real taste of what PC games could really deliver in the coming year or two. In terms of sheer depth, intelligence and atmosphere, *Torment* is state-of-the-role-playing-art. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

BALDUR'S GATE (Interplay, £34.99) Already an RPG classic, *Baldur's Gate* is a mammoth hack-and-slash adventure that uses the D&D system and supports multiple characters. *PCZ* #73, 85%

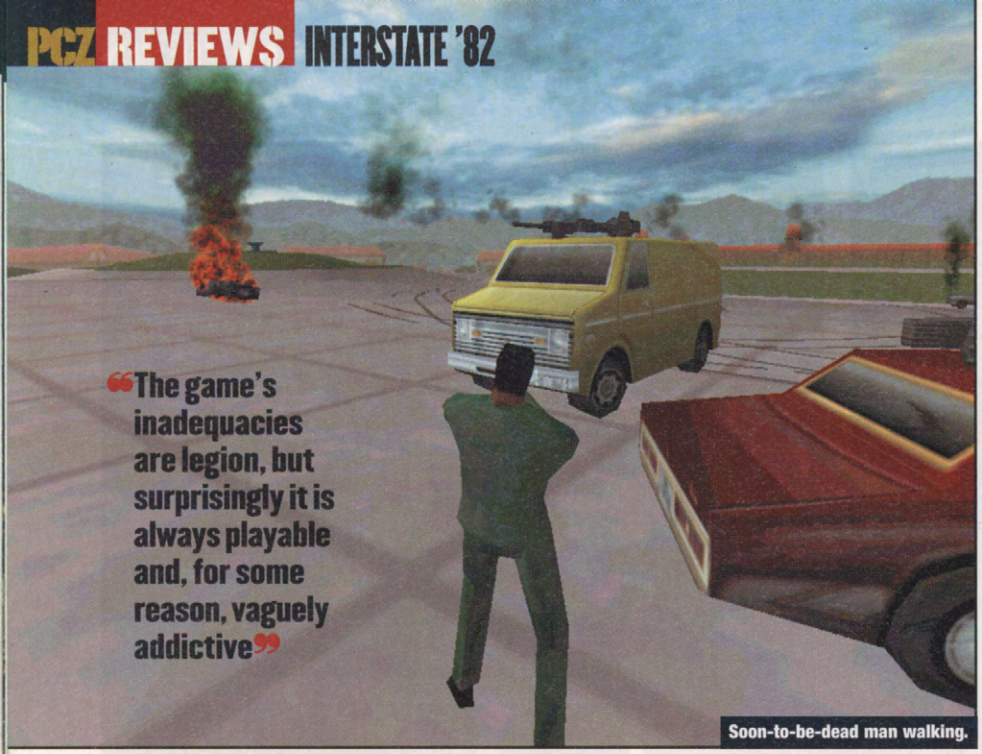
DIABLO (Blizzard, £9.99) An earlier hack-and-slash RPG, but one with a multiplayer element and fantastic non-stop action. *PCZ* #48, 88%

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Atmospheric graphics • Well-designed interface • Chilling animations and clever dialogue

DOWNERS Slow load between screens • Single-player mode only • Unfamiliar fantasy setting

87 Being a zombie has never been this much fun



Soon-to-be-dead man walking.

INTERSTATE '82

£29.99 • Activision • Out now

***Ricardo 'Tubbs' Shoemaker* breaks out in '80s nostalgia. The sad tit...**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 400Mb Hard drive space and Direct3D-compatible 3D accelerator **WE SAY** Solid if unremarkable performance on minimum specs

The original *Interstate '76* was something of a cult classic when it first appeared three years ago. Mixing up mission-based driving and automotive combat, it included the funkiest soundtrack ever heard in a game and 3D engine cut-scenes that were rich with '70s flare. It wasn't the most beautiful game in the world – in fact, it looked pretty shit if you didn't have a monster PC.

But looking back, it was one of the most original PC games of its day.

You'd have thought then that a sequel, with updated graphics and more of the same gameplay, shouldn't be too hard to get right. Perhaps if *Interstate '77* was that sequel, we might have cause to get excited. Unfortunately, as you may have already guessed, *Interstate '82* is the sequel, and like the early part of the decade in which it is set, it's all a bit of a mess. It would be far too easy to deride the game for its electro-pop soundtrack, its badly-dressed characters or bad jokes. In fact, to do so would miss the point. But where *I'76* was actually cool and occasionally funny, *I'82* is just forced and a little sad.

URBAN DECAY

While the original game was set solely on the dusty empty roads of the American south, *I'82*'s first mission chucks you into the urban sprawl of Las Vegas. Nothing wrong with that you may think, but you would expect more than four cars on the road, at least a few that may have better things to do than try and take you off it.

Basically, most of the missions involve eliminating other drivers, with the odd race against time thrown in for good measure. If your car is close to packing up, you can roll out the door and run around on foot. This new feature sounds good but in actual fact adds next to nothing to the gameplay. Apparently, you can actually take out other drivers and nick their car, but we found it impossible to do so and exiting your vehicle invariably means you'll be run over within seconds. Although the AI is actually very good, with drivers using their weapons intelligently, the handling of the cars feels completely at odds with reality. Get your car stuff in a rut and you may find your car rolling uphill. Land on your roof and the car will automatically flip over, an intentional oversight it seems, thanks to self-stabilising gyros in the door handles.

We could go on depreciating the game's poor representation of scale, the sparse and repetitive textures and the lack of any water effects, but we won't. The game's inadequacies are legion, but surprisingly it is always playable and, for some reason, vaguely addictive. Although the way in which you can upgrade your car doesn't feel as well handled as in *I'76*, the fact you can do so is enough to keep interest levels up. However, the simple fact is that *Interstate '82* is not as good as its predecessor, a three-year-old game at a third of the price. Shocking, but true. PCZ



...ur mission is to 'Destroy attacking Dickies', in reference to your ...emy, who's called Rank Dick – which is, of course, hilarious.



Las Vegas is jam packed this time of year.


...e fire effects are pretty neat, as are the evening missions.


You even drive a monster tractor-type thing.

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Fairly intelligent AI • You can steal cars and listen to '80s music • Think a cross between *Quake* and *Driver*...

DOWNERS But, unfortunately, it's nowhere as good as either • Colourful but primitive graphics • Poor handling and car physics

53 ***Interstate* fans will be hugely disappointed**

ALSO CONSIDER

INTERSTATE '76 (Activision, £9.99)
Interstate '76 may be getting on a bit, but it's a better game than its sequel in almost every way – and it's also cheaper. ***PCZ* #64, 70%**

DRIVER (GT Interactive, £34.99)
Similar mission-based driving, again resurrecting '70s cool. The best mission-based driving game you can get. ***PCZ* #82, 80%**

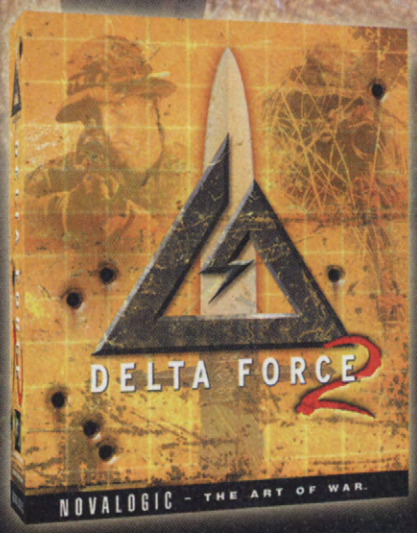

There are 3D engine cut-scenes, but the story is mostly told through FMV.

YOU CAN RUN...
...BUT YOULL JUST DIE TIRED









NOVALOGIC - THE ART OF WAR™ www.novalogic.com

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Large & Loud Internet Gaming

NOVAWORLD™

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL TELEGRAM

Top Secret Communiqué To All Hidden & Dangerous Operatives:

As a reward for your earlier victories, Campaign H.Q. are hereby issuing new orders; three covert campaigns comprising nine deadly missions. Prepare to move your men against advancing German forces in Northern Poland and France, then deploy troops against communist guerrillas in the mountains of Greece. New armaments and vehicles are at your disposal including the Spagin PPS 41 submachine gun and the armoured Wyllis jeep. Your instructions are to rescue all hostages, liberate enemy secrets and break down enemy supply lines.

Stay hidden. Remain dangerous.

Message ends

"The game of this YEAR suddenly got better"
PC Gamer
November '99

H&D
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

FIGHT FOR FREEDOM



Full version of Hidden & Dangerous required

TALONSOFT TAKE 2 PC CD

www.take2games.com • www.illusionsoftworks.com • www.talonsoft.com

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HIDDEN & DANGEROUS: FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

£19.99 • Take 2 • Out now



Keeping the Nazis at bay on the beaches of France.

"That's torn it!"



Cut-scenes show graphics engine's versatility.



The final episode against Greek communists is a let down.

Secret agent Dick Cobbler, alias *Richie Shoemaker*, goes behind enemy lines, behind the scenery, then falls through the floor

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 16Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card and a copy of *Hidden & Dangerous*, obviously **WE SAY** A P233, at least 32Mb RAM and plenty of hard drive space required

Offering up more bugs than a seedy New York apartment, *Hidden & Dangerous*' shortcomings have been very well documented over recent months by your caring, sharing *PC ZONE*. For those who have played through its mix of behind-the-lines tactics and first-person WWII action, there can be few who have failed to witness such imbecilic troops falling through the scenery at choice moments, or floating in mid-air seemingly unbound by the laws of physics. Then there are those missions, where as if attacked by some deadly virus, soldiers would keel over and die for no apparent reason. The thing is, now some six months and three patches since its first release, *Hidden & Dangerous* remains almost as bugged as the day it first appeared.

You would have thought then that this mission pack for the best tactical shooter available would finally clean up those unwanted glitches we've had to live with for so long. Wrong. Freshly-installed and just minutes into mission one, two highly-trained British commandos expired while exiting a stationary vehicle. Soon after, I found my first floater.

IT DOESN'T MATTER

For all its faults, however, *Hidden & Dangerous* remains one of the best damn games ever made, and *Fight For Freedom* does nothing to diminish this accolade.

With nine new missions split across three campaigns, your hand-picked team start out outside a German airfield in rainy Poland – and your mission is to rescue a British agent and steal a ride home in an experimental Nazi bomber. Geographically, the first is a huge mission, with loading times reminiscent of a Spectrum game and *Hidden & Dangerous* being what it is – difficult – restarts are common as you gradually get to grips with each level and its stock of enemy troops. Consequently, with most of the subsequent missions equal in size, you'll have plenty of opportunity to stock up on Doritos and coffee.



Although graphically updated, *Fight For Freedom* is more striking for its new vehicles, notably a hulking great tank, as well as a clutch of extra weapons culled from American and Russian arsenals. Agreeably, each weapon sounds distinct and you'll soon be able to pick out what is being fired at you. More importantly, however, is the fact that the missions are just as varied, if not more so, than in the original game. Again, we are treated to some wonderful cut-scenes. And, although the tactical interface could have done with an overhaul, and we will have to wait for the sequel for some decent head-to-head multiplayer options, *Fight For Freedom* offers more than enough for fans of the original game. If, however, you preferred the tactical edge of *Rainbow Six* or *Rogue Spear*, you'll find little here to sway your opinion. Quite simply, *Fight For Freedom* is more of the same brilliant and bugged gameplay; purely a set of extra missions that adequately cover the final months of WWII – which we won. PCZ

"For all its faults, *Hidden & Dangerous* remains one of the best games ever made"

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Bigger missions • More weapons and extra vehicles • Updated graphics and better sounds

DOWNERS Still buggy and occasionally dumb • Long loading times for some missions

70 Still bugged, but still brilliant

ALSO CONSIDER

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS (Take 2, £34.99) Not so much a consideration as a necessity. Because you'll need this if you don't want to look a tit asking for a refund. *PCZ #79, 91%*

COMMANDOS AMMO PACK (Eidos, £29.99) If you fancy more strategic WWII action in a *C&C* flavour, this double pack should do the trick. Hard, but more than fair. *NOT REVIEWED*

ROGUE SPEAR (Take 2, £34.99) Less bugged and tactically superior to *Hidden & Dangerous*, the modern-day *Rogue Spear* just isn't as much fun. *PCZ #84, 86%*

PCZONE TOP100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the new *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent; check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY

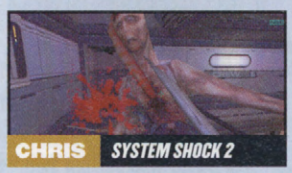
In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month that are often better than some of the games in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100, and a lesser title will drop out to make room for it.

BUDGET

If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply; it is up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

GAME OF THE MOMENT

These are the games currently residing on *our* hard drives



CHRIS *SYSTEM SHOCK 2*



DAVE *OPPOSING FORCE*



RICHIE *UNREAL TOURNAMENT*



MARK *SWAT 3*

PCZONE CLASSIC

Under the new *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights, and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. As you can see from the *PC ZONE* hall of fame on page 65, there are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles (the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre), but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. We consider all recommended titles to be excellent examples of their genre, and you should only dismiss them if the subject matter is not to your taste. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone who likes that particular genre. There will not be many of them. When we say a game is a classic, we mean it!

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE



PCZ #71• 95%

✪ It's over a year old, but that doesn't detract from the fact that *Half-Life* is still probably the best game you can install on your PC. Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100



UNREAL TOURNAMENT — PCZ #81 • 90%

✪ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake II*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



ALIENS VS PREDATOR — PCZ #77 • 87%

✪ It might not be the best, but it's definitely the scariest FPS you can buy. *Aliens Vs Predator* is also the only game that offers three distinct ways of playing through the game, so if you're looking for a solid single-player blast this provides excellent value for money.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



QUAKE II: QUAD DAMAGE — PCZ #59 • 86%

✪ The sequel to 'the most important PC game ever' turns out to be more than worth the wait. Single player might be a let-down, but if you've got access to a network or fast Internet connection you'll be in heaven. Now available as a pack with all the official mission packs.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 700



THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT — PCZ #72 • 84%

✪ Forget about going in with all guns blazing. *Thief* is set in medieval times and the object of the game is to fill your pockets with treasure without being caught. The fact that the guards can hear you coming means that you've got to learn new tactics to get out alive.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOUR DIVISION — PCZ #71 • 81%

✪ Half *Quake*, half *MechWarrior*, this game breathes fresh air into a stale genre. Great graphics and an involving storyline, its only faults are iffy AI and the fact that it's a bit too easy for hardcore *Quake* fans.

PUBLISHER Microids • 00331 4601 5401



KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME — PCZ #77 • 80%

✪ This controversial title should be talked about for its excellent gameplay and graphics rather than its violence and swearing. Because, quite frankly, that side of the game was s***. We still stand by the game though – it's "classic adult entertainment".

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



SIN — PCZ #70 • 80%

✪ Releasing *Sin* at the same time as the vastly superior *Half-Life* was commercial suicide. But you can now bag this title for less than a tenner, which gives you the perfect excuse to find out just how good it actually is. No classic, but an excellent game in its own right.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



JEDI KNIGHT / MYSTERIES OF THE SITH — PCZ #74 • 77%

✪ As a double pack, this ageing 3D shooter and its expansion disc represents outstanding value for money. Dated graphics, but the level design is superb and the missions are some of the best ever made.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01895 4567000



REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL — PCZ #77 • 75%

✪ It might have a daft storyline, but playing an angel sent down to rid the Earth of the fallen gives you the perfect excuse to indulge in a spot of angelic mayhem. When challenged, just say that God told you to do it. And smile benignly.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 0181 844 9000

STRATEGY

AGE OF EMPIRES II



PCZ #84 • 90%

✪ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *Age 2*, gameplay has been honed to perfect with balanced units, and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tib Sun* and enjoy this classic RTS instead.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 00 2000



CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME — PCZ #00 • 89%

✪ A game that lives up to its name, *Civ II* is probably the oldest game in the Top 100 that will still be around in years to come. Turn-based and 2D, it offers unlimited replayability and depth. One of the few games that everyone should own.

PUBLISHER Hasbro • 0181 569 1234



HOMEWORLD — PCZ #82 • 85%

✪ *Homeworld* delivers the dream of millions of PC strategists the world over: a fully three-dimensional strategic experience. The vast expanse of space is the battleground, the hundreds of ships at your command the weapon, and the only limits are your imagination.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



IMPERIUM GALACTICA II — PCZ #85 • 83%

NEW ENTRY Space expansion and empire building has never looked so good. The depth of a turn-based strategy game with the immediate action of real time, plus a great interface and tutorial, so you'll know your way around in no time.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



C&C: TIBERIAN SUN — PCZ #81 • 82%

✪ Perhaps not as stunning as one might have hoped after a three-year wait, *Tiberian Sun* is nevertheless a truly great game. Pushing the *Command & Conquer* genre to its limits, it offers PC strategists immense depth, detail and variety.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



TOTAL ANNIHILATION — PCZ #56 • 82%

✪ With a ridiculous number of units and unrivalled pace, the original *TA* still stands head and shoulders above more recent efforts. No story to speak of and weak single player, but still, for a tenner, no-one should be without a copy.

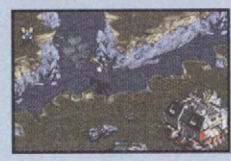
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



DUNGEON KEEPER 2 — PCZ #79 • 81%

✪ *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea. *DK2* takes the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and takes the excellent concept introduced by its predecessor to the next dimension.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



STARCRAFT — PCZ #64 • 80%

✪ Still one of the most popular games online, *StarCraft* offered three distinct races and one of the most involving stories yet seen in real-time strategy. It may look a bit old nowadays, but it runs like a dream if you're still doggedly hanging on to your P90.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



WARZONE 2100 — PCZ #75 • 78%

✪ The first proper 3D real-time strategy game to actually be any good, this sci-fi effort offered almost unlimited variety thanks to a semi-dynamic campaign and masses of research. Might take some getting used to, but it's worth the effort.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING — PCZ #70 • 75%

✪ The original *Populous* was the game that put Bullfrog into orbit and made Peter Molyneux one of the biggest names in the industry. Now Peterless, the new Bullfrog team show that they can do just as well without him.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

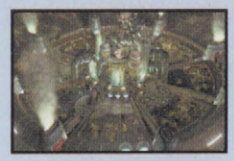
SYSTEM SHOCK 2



PCZ #80 • 93%

✪ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* mixes role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are. In short, it's a title that's absolutely indispensable.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



FINAL FANTASY VII — PCZ #66 • 88%

✪ Fearsomely addictive gem of a game of truly epic proportions. Great graphics, plenty of hidden surprises and massive levels will keep you totally absorbed if you forgive the risible dialogue and turn-based combat.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



BALDUR'S GATE — PCZ #73 • 85%

✪ With every developer 'going 3D' these days, it's refreshing to find an old-school RPG that combines traditional D&D role-playing with sumptuous 2D graphics. *Baldur's Gate* is intelligent and involving in equal measures.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



FALLOUT 2 — PCZ #71 • 83%

✪ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



LANDS OF LORE III — PCZ #74 • 80%

✪ Westwood know how to tell a good story, and this latest in the series is the best of the lot. Combine that with ease of use and some highly polished artwork, and you'll find *LOLIII* a great alternative to more traditional RPG efforts.

PUBLISHER Westwood/EA • 01753 549442



DIABLO — PCZ #48 • 78%

✪ Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game. A budget bargain.

PUBLISHER Zablac/Blizzard • 01626 332233



REVENANT — PCZ #84 • 78%

✪ Imagine a blend of *Diablo* and *Baldur's Gate* and you've got *Revenant*. It might have a trite and clichéd storyline, but that doesn't detract from a highly competent role-playing game, with real-time combat and refined graphics.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



SILVER — PCZ #75 • 75%

✪ If you've finished *Final Fantasy VII* and you're looking for more of the same, *Silver* could fit the bill. Excellent combat and some truly spectacular spells help disguise the fact that it hasn't got an ounce of the imagination that makes the *FF* games so good.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199



RETURN TO KRONDOR — PCZ #76 • 72%

✪ It wasn't worth the five-year wait, but *Return To Krondor* is an entertaining romp nevertheless. The turn-based combat is well executed and the gaming environment is huge, involving and atmospheric. Cool music as well...

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



DARKSTONE — PCZ #85 • 70%

✪ *Darkstone* starts off inauspiciously, but persevere and things start getting a lot better. Masses of spells and skills brighten up a reasonably attractive landscape, and we don't think you can ask for much more than that. Can you?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

ACTION/ADVENTURES

GRIM FANDANGO



PCZ #71 • 90%

✪ If you've followed LucasArts through *Monkey Island, Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and if your mind doesn't work laterally you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 0171 368 2255



DISCWORLD NOIR — PCZ #79 • 89%

✪ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games, and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Pratchett's off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE — PCZ #84 • 88%

✪ LucasArts move away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for the latest Indy outing. Thankfully the adventure elements are still in place in this whip-cracking romp.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000



THE NOMAD SOUL — PCZ #83 • 87%

✪ Distinctly odd, but also refreshingly original, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and (gulp) David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost pulls it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



NOCTURNE — PCZ #84 • 86%

✪ Why would you pay good money to be scared? Because it's damn good fun that's why, and if you find the average PC game laughable then we dare you to sit through *Nocturne* with your curtains drawn. It's a beautiful exercise in computer-generated fear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 • 01753 722 900



MESSIAH — PCZ #85 • 85%

NEW ENTRY Shiny's wonderful shooter features a chubby cherub, but also whores and gratuitous swearing. As Bob, under-age agent of God, you must possess people's bodies and, like a good Christian, kill everything in your way.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION — PCZ#83 85%

✪ Lara's back in her fourth (and best) adventure so far. More moves, better looks, intricate puzzles and a well-developed plot. It's not going to win over the cynics but it's still a damn fine game.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



RESIDENT EVIL II — PCZ #75 • 82%

✪ Not quite as attractive as it could have been, *Resident Evil II* remains one of the most tensely gripping adventure games of recent years. A modicum of simple puzzles, offset by liberal and gratuitous gore make for top entertainment.

PUBLISHER Virgin • 0171 368 2255



MONKEY ISLAND BOUNTY PACK — PCZ #74 • 80%

✪ *Monkey Island 1* and *2* are perhaps the finest point-and-clickers ever to grace the PC. The third outing may have been disappointing, but it would be a sin to exclude it from this excellent triple pack.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 456 7000



SAM & MAX AND DAY OF THE TENTACLE — NOT REVIEWED • 78%

✪ Two of the finest adventure games in the world ever are now available in a single pack for a bargain price. They still match most titles that are released today so go and buy them. Now.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 456 7000

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY



PCZ #68 • 91%

Sporting an updated *TOCA* engine, *Colin McRae* is still the benchmark in rally simulations. Realistic handling, car customisation and stacks of multiplayer options keep it ahead of the competition. The fact that it's now available as a budget title makes it an absolute steal.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



MIDTOWN MADNESS — PCZ #79 • 89%

Drive around Chicago participating in races, annoying the police, or just cruising around. Not quite *Grand Theft Auto 3D*, but just as much fun, this is definitely the best all-out arcade racer you can currently buy on PC.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



MOTOCROSS MADNESS — PCZ #67 • 85%

An astoundingly addictive game. Loads of game and race options and tremendous fun, especially when played with a Microsoft Freestyle Pro pad over a network. Available with the pad for around 50 quid. A must-buy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — PCZ #84 • 82%

Close but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015



TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 • 82%

Predictably, Codemasters have done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrol heads. Graphically it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it most certainly is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



MONACO GRAND PRIX — PCZ #69 • 81%

Essentially this is *F1 Racing Simulation 2*, and an F1 fan's wet dream come true. It looks beautiful, plays even better, and the AI is second to none. You need a hefty machine to have it looking its best though.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 081 944 9000



DRIVER — PCZ #82 • 80%

Criticised for lacking the depth of *Midtown Madness* (this is a PlayStation conversion after all), this is still a good game. A pumping '70s soundtrack helps to recreate that 'Starsky and Hutch' feeling. A wheel, an afro haircut and a false moustache are of course essential.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



SEGA RALLY 2 — PCZ #84 • 79%

Not as good as hooking up with five of your mates down the local arcade, but this is a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car round the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this much fun?

PUBLISHER Sega • 0181 995 3399



CARMAGEDDON II — PCZ #69 • 77%

It's *that* game again, this time with full 3D pedestrians. More blood, more cars, more tracks – and now with added missions. If you liked the first game, you'll love this one. If you don't, you can just bog off.

PUBLISHER SCI • 0171 585 3308



NEED FOR SPEED: RC — PCZ #80 • 76%

Need for Speed fans will have their wants fully satisfied with *Road Challenge*, the latest addition to the series. The real clincher for driving games is their feel, and this one feels so good it's obscene. Not a revolutionary leap in the series but definitely the best one.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

FALCON 4



PCZ #72 • 92%

We waited patiently for years, and for once we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* sports beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing. If you're going to buy one flight sim, make it this one. You won't be disappointed.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893



F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR — PCZ #68 • 89%

This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece is perhaps a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this one.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633



F/A 18E SUPER HORNET — PCZ #83 • 88%

If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big huge capital 'R', then look no further. In fact this game is so lifelike, the US Navy have adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. Watch out for friendly fire.

PUBLISHER Titus Software • 0171 700 2119



MIG ALLEY — PCZ #80 • 87%

MiG Alley gives hardcore flight simmers' piloting skills a run for their money, but don't be put off. If you're willing to put in the work, it will repay you with excellent in-flight graphics and brilliant mission planning elements.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337



APACHE HAVOC — PCZ #73 • 85%

Of the three main chopper sims available, *Longbow 2* is the one if you're a hard-core sim head, *Team Apache* is the choice for fans whose preference swings the other way, and *Apache Havoc* straddles the gap. And the graphics are to die for.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337



FLIGHT UNLIMITED III — PCZ #82 • 86%

For all those who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than an excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this is (along with the *Flight Sim* series) an object of worship and devotion. It deserves high praise.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



FLANKER 2.0 — PCZ #85 • 86%

NEW ENTRY Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yank blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding, *Flanker 2.0* recreates the real thing in minute detail. Hours of practice are needed before you go off shooting stuff.

PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300



TEAM ALLIGATOR — PCZ #85 • 84%

NEW ENTRY Helicopter sims are rare, but when they do come they are usually superb. *Team Alligator* doesn't quite surpass the cheaper *Apache/Havoc*, but has beautiful graphics and feels great to fly. The best Russian chopper sim around.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



FLIGHT SIM 2000 — PCZ #85 • 80%

NEW ENTRY Not a huge step forward from *Flight Sim 98*, but still the choice of millions of high-flyers. There is a price to pay for its incredible looks, however – you'll need a NASA PC to run the thing. Expect a load of expansion packs to follow.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



JANE'S WORLD WAR II FIGHTERS — PCZ #72 • 83%

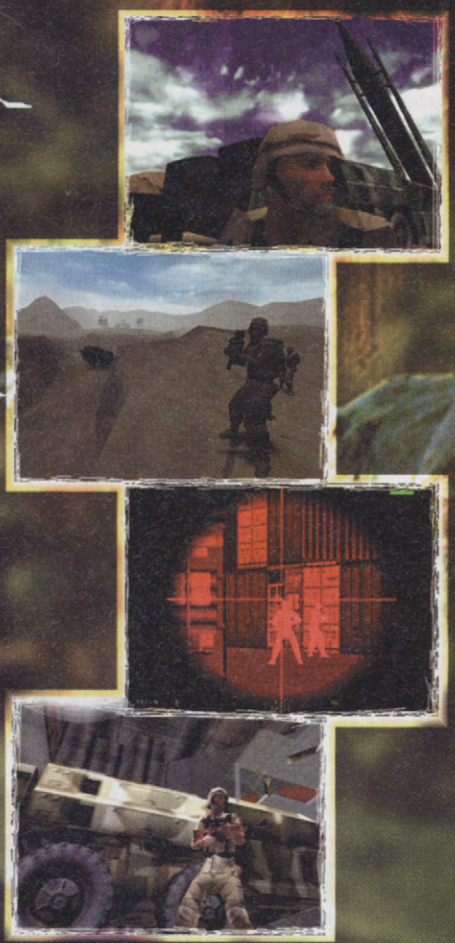
It's been a fierce dogfight to see who rules the WWII flight sim skies. *Jane's* combines realism with accessibility and ease and, although the game doesn't have a dynamic campaign feature, its graphics make it a clear winner.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE EUROPE PROUDLY PRESENT

SPEC OPS II

U.S. ARMY GREEN BERETS



"With an amazing level of realism and stupendous atmosphere, it's the yardstick that other such games will be judged by."
PC ZONE, December

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

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FEATURING 25 DEADLY NEW MISSIONS • AN ARSENAL OF REAL MILITARY WEAPONS • LETHAL MULTIPLAYER MODE VIA INTERNET

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SPORTS

FIFA 2000



PCZ #84 • 88%

✪ The *FIFA* franchise has been rolling on for years, and it certainly gets better each time. Although it missed a classic rating by a whisker, it's still the best conversion of the finest sport known to man. If you're into your football, then you should own *FIFA 2000*. It's as simple as that.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SUPREME SNOWBOARDING — PCZ #85 • 86%

NEW ENTRY Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without breaking a leg. All the streetwise attitude you'd expect is here, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199



NBA LIVE 2000 — PCZ #85 • 83%

NEW ENTRY As slick as always, but what makes the 2K edition special is the inclusion of teams from the 1950s onwards, comedy haircuts *et al*. Not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



NBA: INSIDE DRIVE — PCZ #82 • 82%

✪ While not exactly the most popular sport in this country, *Inside Drive* manages to suck you in with its supreme playability. Its presentation is not quite up to EA standards (what is?), but when the gameplay is this good, who cares?

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF — PCZ #80 • 82%

✪ Knocking *Links* off the office golfing perch is no mean feat, but *PGA*'s gameplay is so addictive all other contenders can tee off. Our very own Keith Pullin took the entire summer off to design his own courses for it. But he has got a hole in one in the head.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



VIRTUAL POOL 2 — PCZ #58 • 82%

✪ Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2 — PCZ #68 • 81%

✪ The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates, and when you're tired of the baize you can move round and have a go on the fully featured darts board instead. Saves going down the Working Men's Club

PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive • 0171 368 2255



ACTUA SOCCER 3 — PCZ #72 • 80%

✪ If you can't get on with *FIFA*, then *Actua* is the second port of call for footie fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which helps to maintain its shelf life.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601



BRIAN LARA CRICKET — PCZ #75 • 78%

✪ Cricket isn't the easiest game to convert to the PC but Codemasters have done the best job, despite the fact that *Brian* has obviously been ported straight over from the PlayStation. For aspiring country-dwellers everywhere.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



NHL 2000 — PCZ #83 • 77%

✪ EA's hockey series has improved graphics and AI, fast-paced addictive gameplay and you can now graft your digitised face onto a player, then watch it beaten with a stick to a bloody pulp. Now that's family entertainment.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

SPACE COMBAT

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER



PCZ #82 • 89%

✪ The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany where you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. Deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656



FREESPACE 2 — PCZ #84 • 85%

✪ Completely different from *X*, *Freespace 2* is fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. A superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 0171 551 4222



X WING: ALLIANCE — PCZ #77 • 83%

✪ At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode in the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



PRIVATEER 2 — PCZ #44 • 80%

✪ Not as open-ended as *Elite*, but far more rewarding as an overall experience. Great graphics even today, and hey it's on budget so it's better value for money than ever.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



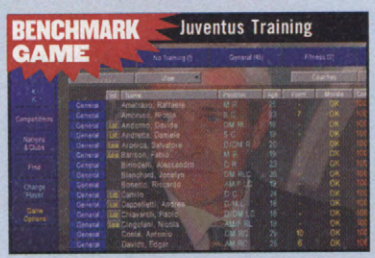
WING COMMANDER PROPHECY GOLD — PCZ #59 • 77%

✪ The graphics look a bit dated now, but this is still a great game by anyone's standards. *Wing* neophytes start here.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

MANAGEMENT

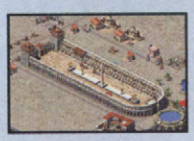
CM 99/2000



PCZ #84 • 92%

✪ More than a game… it's a way of life. So say fans of the best football management game in existence. If you dare to play it you can kiss goodbye to your social life, and expect to spend hours each and every day poring over unknown players in a bid to discover the next Ronaldo. The word benchmark doesn't really describe how much better than the competition this game is.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000



CAESAR III — PCZ #70 • 88%

✪ Starting from scratch you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



SIMCITY 3000 — PCZ #74 • 85%

✪ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and newbies alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON — PCZ #75 • 83%

✪ Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden 'dippers, to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RT* is hugely addictive.

PUBLISHER Hasbro • 0181 569 1234



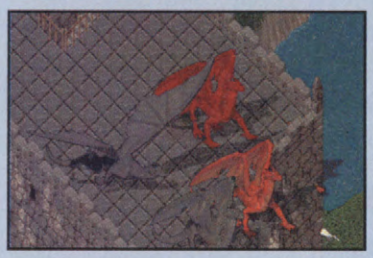
PREMIER MANAGER 99 — PCZ #76 • 80%

✪ It's no *Champ Manager*, but this is the only other football management game on the PC worth bothering about. Decent graphics set it apart from Eidos' masterpiece but *PM99* doesn't have the depth or detail.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

ONLINE ONLY

ULTIMA ONLINE



PCZ #80 • 92%

✪ In many ways an old-school RPG, but with amazing freedom, depth and open-endedness. So addictive that *ZONE* editor Chris has sold his car, his house and his soul to finance a permanent Web connection. The best thing about *Ultima Online* is that your world is constantly changing and evolving, and it's populated by real people, just like you.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



EVERQUEST — PCZ #80 • 85%

✪ If you find *Ultima Online* too vast, *EverQuest* may be the online RPG for you. It's far more combat-orientated than *Ultima*, and more linear as a result. Repetitive at higher levels but worth checking out all the same.

PUBLISHER Sony (sold at Electronic Boutique only) • 0171 428 5961



NETSTORM — PCZ #59 • 73%

✪ A curious blend of chess, *Red Alert* and Baron Munchausen, *NetStorm* is also an elegant and addictive multiplayer game that works beautifully across a standard modem.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



WARBIRDS — PCZ #70 • 72%

✪ The original WWII on-line dogfighting sim and still one of the best. With over 48 different aircraft to chose from, this should keep anyone with a passing interest in air combat very happy indeed.

PUBLISHER Interactive Magic • 01344 409399



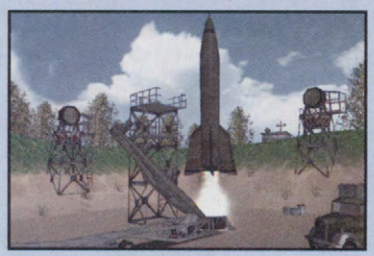
DAWN OF ACES — PCZ #77 • 60%

✪ Not entirely dissimilar to *Warbirds*, but set in WWI. Not as fast or as hectic, which some might say is a good thing. We happen to like our action hectic and that's why we gave *Dawn* a lower score. That's life, bud.

PUBLISHER Interactive Magic • 01344 409399

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS



PCZ #79 • 91%

✪ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that's come closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. From the very first mission, it grabs you by the balls and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



SWAT 3 — PCZ #85 • 89%

NEW ENTRY AI doesn't get any better than SWAT 3's. Add to this amazing graphics, an ingenious command interface and edge-of-your-seat gameplay, and you've got a top title.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



BATTLEZONE 2 — PCZ #84 • 87%

✪ Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. The fight for world domination has never looked so good.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



ROGUE SPEAR — PCZ #84 • 86%

✪ We loved *Rainbow Six* and although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



SPEC OPS 2 — PCZ #84 • 84%

✪ Challenging *Hidden & Dangerous* for the top spot, *Spec Ops 2* puts you in charge of a four-man green beret squad intent on staying alive and shooting the enemy in the head. Incredibly realistic, with top-notch sound.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS



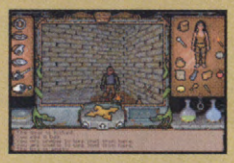
DOOM

✪ This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake, Unreal Tournament* or (gulp) *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.



ULTIMA VII

✪ Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

✪ We reviewed this game back in the very first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.



DUNE II

✪ If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than a lot of new titles is testament to its staying power.



SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

✪ EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.



UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

✪ This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles, and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever on its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.



MAGIC CARPET

✪ Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games released in the early days of 3D. So original in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.



WING COMMANDER

✪ The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so successful, they made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and people stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?



TOMB RAIDER

✪ She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?



CIVILIZATION

✪ The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civ* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

We move the information that moves your world. adaptec

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SIZE COMMUNICATION

GREAT EXP

Que será, será. Whatever will be, will be. The future's not ours to see, que será, será. Charlie Brooker asks questions regardless.

It's all very well having us banging on about the future of gaming, but what do you – yes, *you* – make of it all? After all, you're the ones who pay not only our wages, but the wages of the games industry as a whole – so your opinions are pretty damned valid actually, thank you very much.

Well, in creeping deference to your own good selves, for the next four pages we've turned the mag over to a selection of typical *PC ZONE* readers, recruited via the chat forum on our website (www.pczone.co.uk). What follows is a cross-section of your thoughts on the games of tomorrow – a mixture of technological conjecture and wishful thinking, from respondents aged between 15 and 31.

After a good deal of analysis, we realised that four things stand out. First of all, you're a bright bunch of sods, aren't you? There are enough interesting ideas here to flesh out a couple of good games-related sci-fi novels (no guarantee they'd be good reads, mind).

Secondly, some of you should turn your hands to game development – you've got definite, detailed ideas about the kind of changes you'd like to make to the software you're playing now. Reader Robert Smith even submitted an entire design document for a dream *Star Wars* game (far too lengthy to be reprinted here).

Thirdly, it's time that someone somewhere started developing a decent VR headset because loads of you out there expect to be using them in the future.

And finally – if even *half* of these concepts come to fruition, the future of gaming is going to be a very exciting ride. Unless it all goes horribly wrong and we end up playing *VR Hangman* instead. Anyway, enough of our endless waffle. Over to you.

WHICH GAME WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO SEE A SEQUEL TO — AND WHAT WOULD IT CONSIST OF?

It would have to be *Monkey Island*. I'd like to see more of the story. When it comes to sequels in general, they shouldn't simply be more of the same; they should be loosely based on the story, yet as different as possible. *Final Fantasy VIII*, for instance, isn't connected to *Final Fantasy VII* but it's still a sequel of sorts.
Eddie Amphlett

I'd like to see a sequel to *Jurassic Park: Trespasser*. I know that it was a bit crap, but it had *soooo* much potential. If the design flaws could be addressed, and the game world made less linear, I reckon it could be a classic.
Myles Robey

***Realms Of The Haunting* remains the scariest game I've played. You could lose yourself in it for hours. Great story, great weapons, great atmosphere. Even if they just remade the same game with the *Unreal* or *Quake III* engine, I'd buy it again.**
The Frew

***Little Big Adventure 2*, definitely. *LBA 1* plus *LBA 2*, times a hundred – what a game *that* would be.**
Mike Banim

I'd like a decent follow-up to *Doom* – bloody scary and bloody dangerous. I lived with that game for years and was expecting *Quake* to be even better – but it wasn't. Frankly, I found it disappointing. Even now, if I want a quick rush of adrenaline, I reach for *Doom* – not *Quake 1* or *2*, or *Half Life*, or *Unreal*.
Paul Griffin

***Elite*, re-vamped into a huge 3D-accelerated, online-only, everlasting space epic. Throw in hundreds of user-customisable ship types, live voice and video comms – and crewing stations, so several players can fly a ship co-operatively. Currency and equipment transfers too, so players can set each other tasks and quests, and of course nick anything they don't want to pay for. Let's not forget mind-bendingly huge freighters and warships as well.**
Dave Gregory



Paul Griffin reckons that *Quake III* still hasn't recaptured the excitement of *Doom*. What will?

WHAT WILL THE GAMES OF THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

The obvious answer would be that they'll be indistinguishable from real life. However, I don't agree: I think games will look BETTER than real life. People have been living with the look of the real world for thousands of years, so why just reproduce it in a game? Think of the greatest sunset you have ever seen, and how beautiful it was. In the games of the future, sights like that will be ten-a-penny – and far clearer and more detailed than the genuine article.
The Frew

In the future, we'll have holographic monitors – empty boxes with thousands of lasers creating images that look so real, you could put your hand in the box and touch them... although the endemic nature of lasers would mean that actually doing so wouldn't be such a good idea.
Robert Smith

Within the next couple of years, they'll play like the tastiest pre-rendered cut-scenes currently look. Motion blurring and depth of field will make a massive difference in the quality of in-game graphics and I predict particle fogging and wake-mapping too – fog will swirl and part as you walk through it. Fully animated textures and curved polygons are also going to see huge improvements.
Dave Gregory



Someday, all games will look as good as this.

ECTATIONS

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

As scary as they look, all these people are regular readers of *PC ZONE* and, as such, they know what they're talking about. Capische?


PAUL GRIFFIN


THE FREW


MIKE BANIM


MYLES ROBEY


ROBERT SMITH


ROB MEDLOCK


EDDIE AMPHLETT

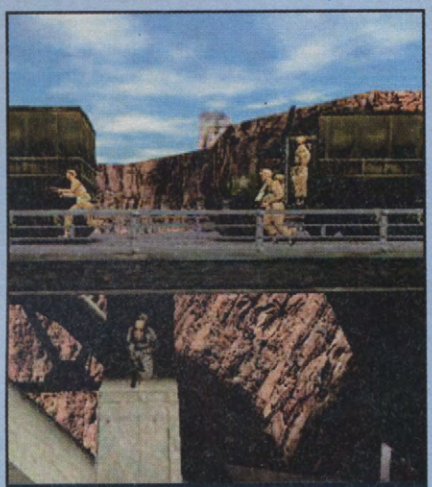
WHICH GENRE WILL DEVELOP THE MOST, AND IN WHAT WAY?

First person shooters, and sports games – those f******g EA tie-ins come out every five minutes, leaving the last one you bought outdated by the time you open the box. Hopefully adventure games will evolve more. *Grim Fandango* was a fantastic view of things to come.
Eddie Amphlett

Action adventure games such as *The Nomad Soul* and *Outcast* have shown great potential. However, as has always been the case, I suppose first- or third-person action games will be the games that benefit most, due to technological advances which no other genres seem to use to such effect.
Myles Robey

Online gaming is the way forward. Any genre which fully utilises Net play will develop massively – mostly team-based 3D shooters like *Team Fortress Classic*, or RPGs.
Mike Banim

It's difficult to say really, because the genres are blurring to a large extent. I can see the first-person perspective being seriously involved, whatever direction the games choose to take. Not just for the shooters we're used to, but as a medium for translating the game world into a more 'human friendly' interface.
Paul Griffin


War? What is it good for? The games of tomorrow, apparently... *Team Fortress Classic 2.*

I reckon smut will explode, especially among the sad bastards. There'll be computer peripherals that connect to parts of the body... virtual sex anyone? *(Is that an offer or a rhetorical question? – Ed)*
Robert Smith

Online war. The old cliché of multiple games coming together to allow sprawling 24-hour wargames with everything from foot-soldiers to stealth bombers. Command servers will send squadrons of freshly-recruited plebs into the warzone to perform their orders. That's the idea, anyway. How you prevent it dissolving into a free-for-all within the first three hours of the system going live is another matter.
Dave Gregory

WHAT KIND OF SUBJECT MATTER WILL GAMES DEAL WITH?

I don't think the subject matter will differ much. Perhaps we'll have more mature subjects, although you wouldn't want to play something like *Schindler's List* or *American History X* as an action game. If we were to have games dealing with serious subjects like these, they'd have to be adventures.
Eddie Amphlett

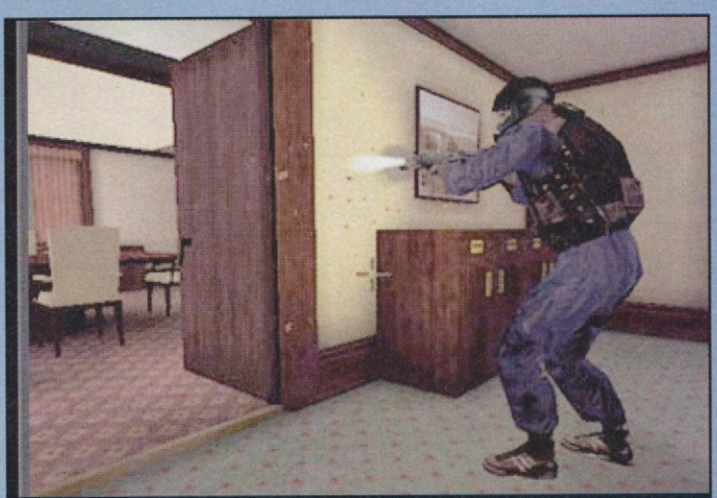
I believe future games will draw on our emotions. People will get around to real-life stories, of careers and relationships. We'll feel love, compassion, guilt, comradeship, and true fear – and the games will emotionally drain us.
The Frew

Decapitations and anything scary. Games will become more graphic as hardware improves and 'horror' will become an established gaming genre.
Mike Banim

All sorts. Come on! What did the games of 20 years ago deal with? Sex, sci-fi, orcs, guns, horror, and racing. Same as today. Do we want to play games which depict the real world? Hardly. Not unless we can kill the boss or run over his kids. *(Now, now – Ed)*
Paul Griffin

Monkey Tennis?
Myles Robey

There'll be a stamping-on-babies-heads simulator. *(I sincerely hope not – Ed)*
Rob Medlock


Are ultra-realistic combat games like *SWAT 3* the way ahead?

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

Online games that charge per month like *Ultima Online* and *Everquest*. It's a disgrace that we have to pay for the thing in the first place, then continue to pay after we get it home.
Eddie Amphlett

The continuation of the slack practices of the present, where companies release games that aren't finished, and expect us to tend to them with patches.
The Frew

Another *Tiberian Sun*
Rob Medlock

Games where you're in a nightclub or whatever, and you meet a gorgeous bird and virtually shag her. Nothing's better then the real thing. *(Hark at Captain Sex God – Ed)*
Robert Smith

Games for f***wits. The ITV audience are getting increasing access to PCs, and sooner or later some tit is going to invent a 3D, million-user, bandwidth-gobbling, online *Richard and Judy* world. The information revolution will crawl to a halt as the Internet gets bogged down by thousands of poor old Irenes, pressing the wrong button and getting all confused as they bundle into *Ainsley's Celebrity Cyber Cookout.*
Dave Gregory



Eddie Amphlett doesn't want to pay for online games in the future. Well said.



Westwood – our readers don't want another *Tib Sun* clone. OK?

HOW WILL WE INTERACT WITH GAMES IN THE NEXT CENTURY?

Although they're shit now, VR headsets might be the way forward. It'd be neat if they worked.
Myles Robey

I can't see us progressing past some sort of VR headset anytime soon. I'm not too keen on the thought of plugging wires directly into the base of my skull to play *Quake 37.*
Eddie Amphlett

We'll be playing with a keyboard and a mouse – unless everyone buys those things that go on your head. But then we'll all look like twats. *(Maybe so, but at least we won't be able to see one another – Ed)*
Rob Medlock



Look like a twat in the 21st Century.

WHAT ABOUT PIRACY?

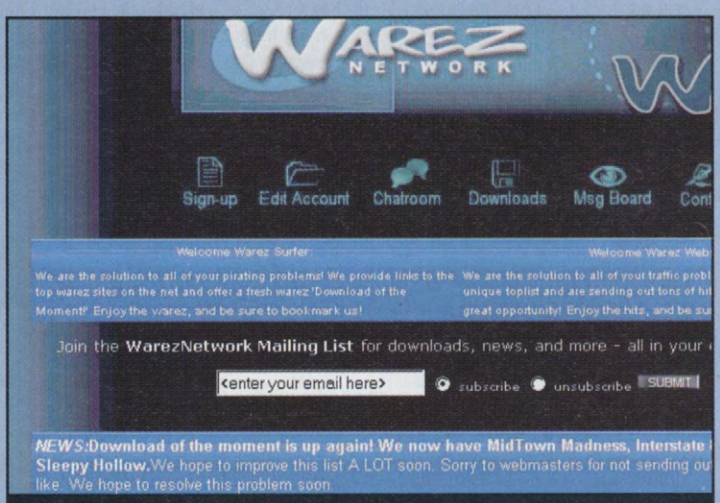
I think companies will develop bigger and better ways of combating pirates, but they'll never go away. As long as there is a product, there'll be someone who wants to take it for free. I don't think we can do much to stop them.
Myles Robey

Piracy is a pain in the arse: either the anti-piracy measures screw legitimate players up, or they're so easy to bypass, they're pointless. The problem is the pirates are at least as smart as the guys who design the anti-piracy measures. The best solution is to make games so cheap that no-one can be bothered to copy them.
Paul Griffin

In the future you'll have to pay a subscription to play games over the Internet. You'll download the bare essential software, then configure your computer from the company's website, uploading information including your e-mail and home address, and so on. This will have the effect of considerably reducing piracy.
Robert Smith

Companies will continue to pour money into anti-piracy systems that get cracked within 12 seconds of release.
Rob Medlock

All games – absolutely all of 'em – will be online. You won't even keep them on your hard drive, you'll download them at dozens of Megs per second, which means games will be free, you'll just pay for the online time. Piracy will be replaced by hacking free connection time to servers.
Dave Gregory



Piracy? On the Internet? Surely not.

HOW WILL THE AUDIENCE CHANGE?

Games will become just as familiar a medium as television or music. We'll have full entertainment systems, with the TV containing the system, and all games will be played from there. Everyone who currently uses a TV will be playing games.
The Frew

I think women will become more interested when graphics in games become photo-realistic. Right now if they see something like *Half life*, it doesn't actually look very lifelike, and they think, "Er, yeah, so what?"
Mike Banim

Maybe there'll be more female players, but not old bastards. The way we interact with games will become much more complex, and the oldies – even us, maybe – will find it increasingly difficult.
Dave Gregory



Women won't like computer games until the graphics are realistic. So says Mike Banim, although his non-existent girlfriend wouldn't comment.

HOW WILL THE GAMES OF TOMORROW BE CREATED?

Typical code will be replaced by a simpler, self-fixing code, alleviating any bugs or glitches in the program.
The Frew

Brain-to-PC interfaces will mean anyone with an idea for a game can instantly create it simply by thinking about it.
Mike Banim

By programmers, with their hands. That's not a smart-arse answer, honest – it's what I think will genuinely happen.
Rod Medlock

Quickly, and full of bugs, which will be fixed after countless downloads of 40Mb patches.
Paul Griffin

Programming languages are getting easier to use, so the average Joe will be able to write small programs to suit their needs. There'll probably be a master computer that will tailor games to the user's requests.
Robert Smith

By opinion poll. Users will decide what they'd like to see in the game and diligent programmers will make it happen. And since games will be downloaded from central servers as you play, patches will appear daily, often installing on the fly: a bunch of users will report a bug and within ten minutes you'll suddenly notice that glitch you spotted is no longer there.
Dave Gregory

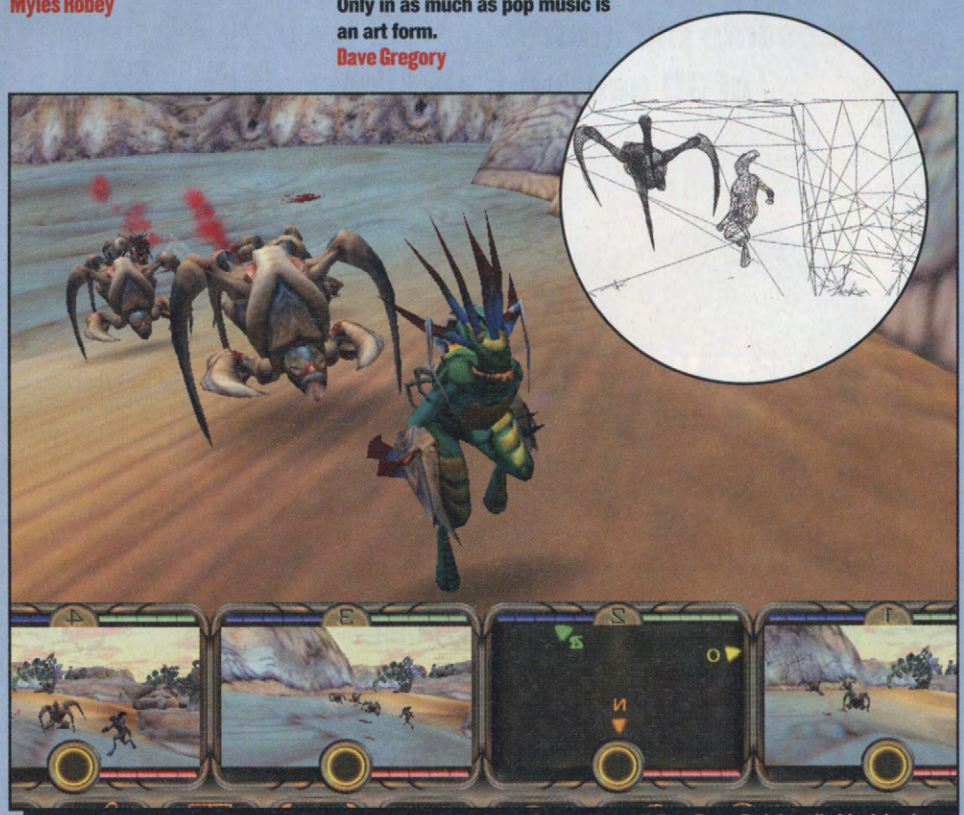
WILL GAMES EVER BE CONSIDERED AN ART FORM?

I don't think so. Some games try to promote this idea now, but they're always dismissed as pretentious. I don't think that will change.
Myles Robey

No. The 'Art' establishment is far too far up its own arse to look for alternatives to a soiled bed.
Paul Griffin

Only in as much as pop music is an art form.
Dave Gregory

Yes, just as other types of media are held in high regard. And games could overtake the others in terms of popularity.
The Frew



Computer games as an art in their own right? We'd rather hang this on our wall than Tracy Emin's soiled bedsheets.

THE FUTURE OF 3D GAMING

Think the current crop of rapid graphics cards is pretty mind-bending? You ain't seen nothing yet, chum. *Phil Wand* gazes into the future of 3D gaming



A combination of bump mapping and surface embossing, courtesy of the lovely GeForce 256.

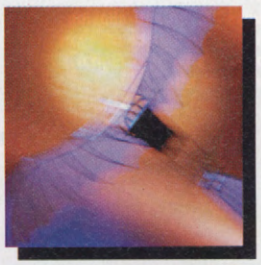
In the same way that *everyone* can remember the first time they had Golden Nuggets for breakfast, *everyone* can remember seeing their first 3D accelerator card in action: the swirling fog, the glints of light, the polished textures, the dizzying frame rate, and that curiously satisfying 'click' from the back of the PC as the new 3D speedster took over from the old 2D wimp. A fantastic new world was dancing erotically in front of your very eyes, and you thought that nothing on your monitor would captivate you in the same way ever again.

Or would it? Most video card manufacturers have new and affordable toys waiting in the wings, and they're gonna have all manner of hardware trickery to make games faster, smoother, more complex and, above all, more *real*. There are some amazing visual technologies and rendering advancements that you'll be taking for granted come this time next year – bump mapping, transform and lighting (T&L), full scene anti-aliasing, and more besides. Everything is designed to make your life as a gamer even more engrossing and more adrenalised than ever before.

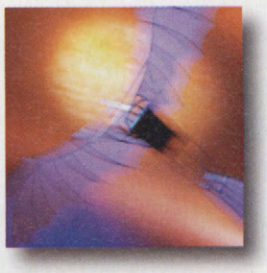
In this article we take a look at all the major players in the 3D graphics arena and the various technologies they have to offer. We talk about the new techniques and methods for making your eyes pop out on stalks – because *everyone* wants to recapture that wonderful 3D virgin feeling.



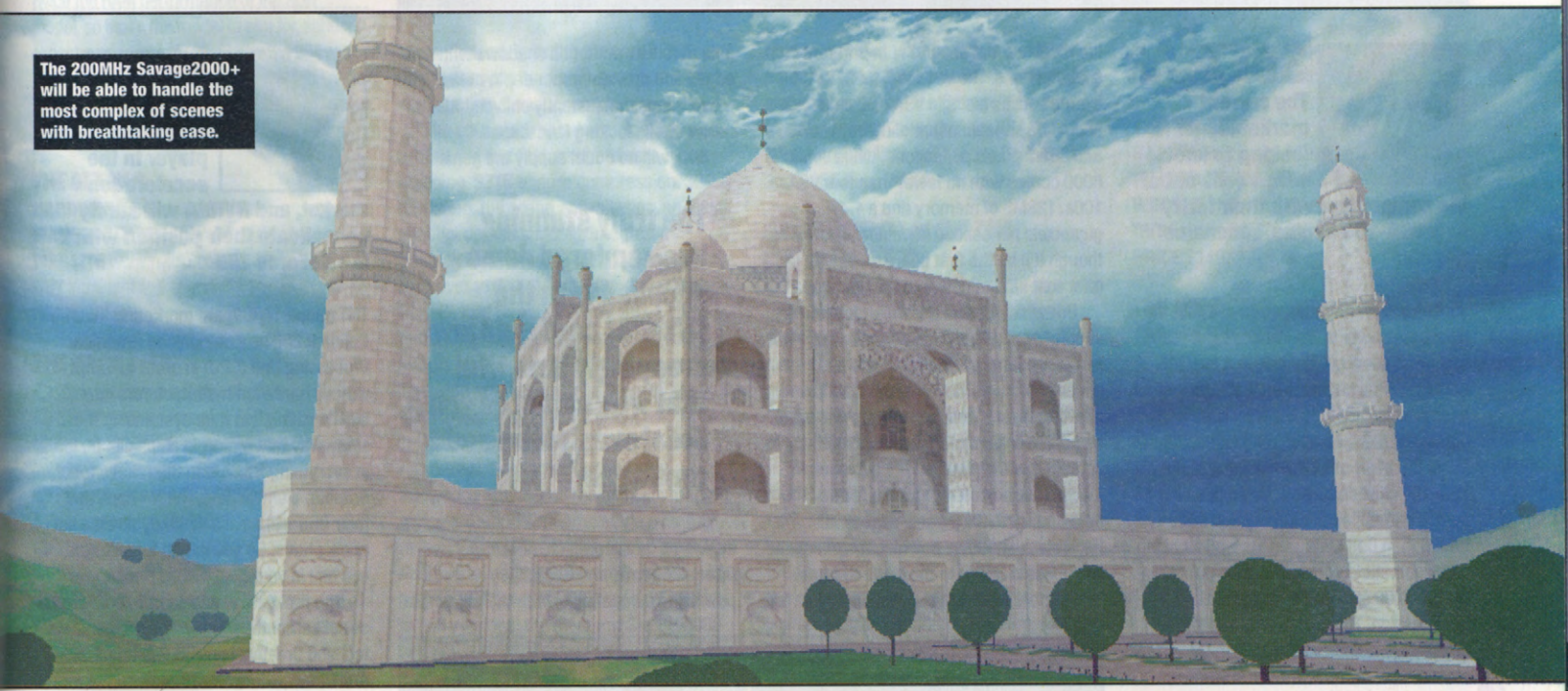
With bump mapping and Matrox's unique Vibrant Color Quality system, the water in this scene looks... well, wet.



The current crop of 3D cards tend to render things with hard edges and stark shadows...



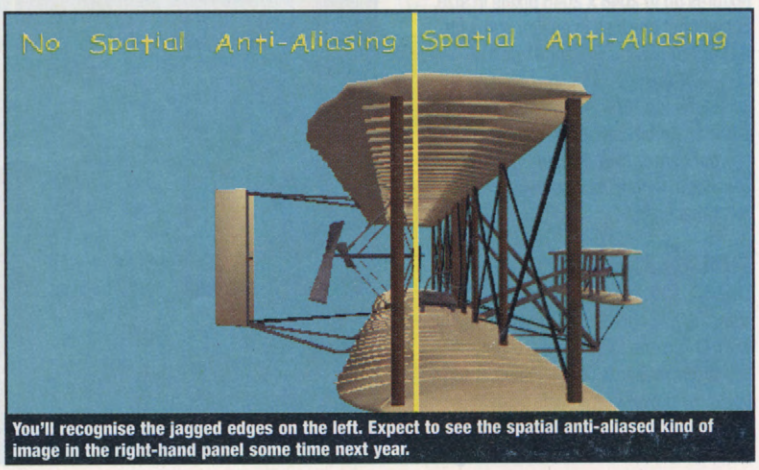
...whereas new cards will be able to mimic the real world with soft lines and blurred shadows, all rendered in real time.



The 200MHz Savage2000+ will be able to handle the most complex of scenes with breathtaking ease.



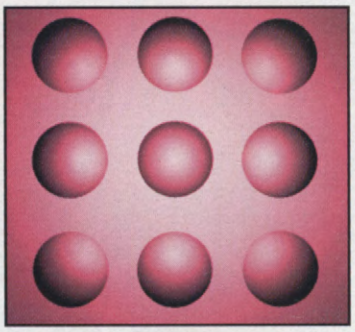
Combined transform and lighting (T&L) and sheer processing power radically enhances a game's photorealism.



You'll recognise the jagged edges on the left. Expect to see the spatial anti-aliased kind of image in the right-hand panel some time next year.

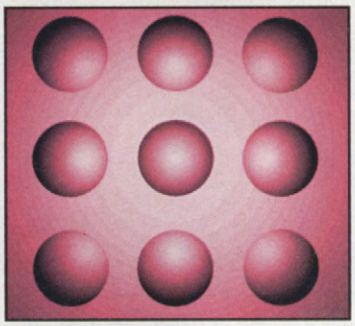


Quake III with anti-aliasing and motion blur, courtesy of Voodoo5's T-Buffer digital cinematic effects.



A 32-bit texture rendered in true colour. Note the smoothness of transitions in light and colour.

A 16-bit texture rendered in patented chunk-o-vision – exaggerated, but you get the idea.



of Microsoft operating systems, from Windows 95 through Windows 2000 and Windows NT.

THE DETAILS

HARDWARE Voodoo4 and Voodoo5
MANUFACTURER 3Dfx Interactive
WEBSITE www.3dfx.com
OUT April 2000
PRICE £349

THE GOOD BITS

- Brand leader with unrivalled support and technical backup
- 128Mb graphics memory, 350MHz RAMDAC
- 32-bit rendering, 32-bit textures and real-time anti-aliasing
- On-board digital cinematic effects and FXT1 texture compression
- 2D resolutions up to 2048 x 1536

THE BAD BITS

- Plenty of power, but where are the transform and lighting functions?
- By the time it's released, both NVIDIA and ATI will have expanded their ranges further
- 3Dfx somehow lost $12.8m on revenues of $40.4m last quarter

3DFX

The current market leader is looking to knock seven bells out of the competition with their feisty new VSA-100 engine, codename Napalm

Just as you were getting excited about the awesome power of the Voodoo3, get ready to wave it goodbye. Not only is it the last non-scaleable architecture that 3dfx will ever produce, it's also hopelessly outclassed by their upcoming technology.

At the heart of all the new stuff is the VSA-100 chip, codename Napalm, which comes with 32Mb of memory and more brawn than Dolf Lundgren. As well as being fully compatible with Microsoft's DirectX, the VSA-100 also introduces texture compression. This technology enables developers to use much larger, more elaborate, more *real* 32-bit true colour textures up to 2048 x 2048 pixels in size, but without any loss in quality and with higher frame rates chucked into the bargain. Core speed for the chip should vary between 166MHz and 183MHz, and T-Buffer digital cinematic effects will pep up your games even further with motion blur, depth of field blur, soft shadows and soft reflections.

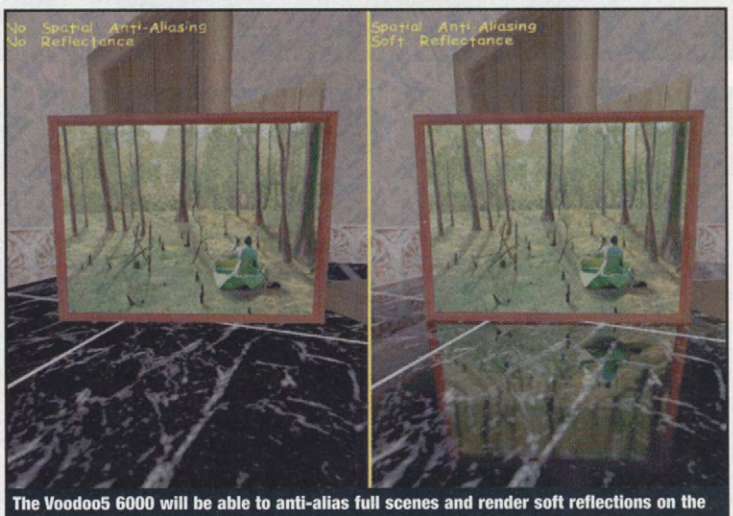
DOUBLE WHAMMY

The VSA-100 also reintroduces SLI, something Voodoo2 owners will be familiar with. This is the technology that enables you to 'chain' cards onto each other to boost the power output. The scaleable architecture takes advantage of this fact, with the Voodoo4 and Voodoo5 having identical foundations but with different chip specifications. The Voodoo4 4500, for example, uses a single VSA-100 chip and should be capable of handling between 333 and 367m pixels per second, while Voodoo5 6000 comes with no fewer than four VSA-100s, 128Mb of memory and a 1.47 gigapixels per second capability. It looks as though it'll be the first board of its type to offer that kind of power to the home user.

But what does all this mean for you? In simple terms, it's a huge step forward – not just for sheer processing muscle and super-smooth frame rates, but also for photo-realism. Game developers will soon be able to cram more polygons onto the screen, enabling game worlds to contain many more complex shapes and fine detailing, so those jagged-edged walls, thick black shadows and wobbly reflections will become things of the past. 3Dfx's remarkable T-Buffer engine claims to be able to render authentic shadows with soft edges and provide proper depth of field blur – two things that instantly enliven today's rather sterile looking landscapes.

3Dfx will no doubt supply the game industry's most complete API support for DirectX, OpenGL and Glide. They're also promising compatibility with the full range

> **"The truly stunning live-rendered demo supplied with the [NVIDIA] card is so jaw-droppingly beautiful that we guarantee you'll drool over it time and time again"**



The Voodoo5 6000 will be able to anti-alias full scenes and render soft reflections on the fly. Impressive stuff.

NVIDIA

The TNT and TNT2 made them a top player in the acceleration market, and NVIDIA will surely consolidate their position with the GeForce 256

TNT people NVIDIA are marketing their new GeForce 256 as a standalone Graphical Processing Unit (GPU) in order to tempt various hardware manufacturers into incorporating it in their systems. In the same way that Motorola chips can be found in everything from Jeep Cherokees to Hotpoint dishwashers, NVIDIA hope that their GPU will have a similarly diverse set of applications. So you might, for example, see one in your next mobile phone.

The first card available from your high street computer store will be the game-focused Creative Labs 3D Blaster Annihilator, set to retail at around the £200 mark. Its core technology features a 256-bit rendering engine, 32Mb memory, and full support for both DirectX 7 and OpenGL. In short, it'll work effortlessly with pretty much whatever you throw at it.

The board itself contains a whopping 23 million transistors – more than twice the density of a Pentium III – and although the 150MHz core clock speed is set to the same as the 'old' TNT2 Ultra, it's easily wound up to a stable 183MHz. Indeed, the Annihilator comes with its own tool to enable you to do this. Similar tools are available for all the hardware featured here, with overclocking now the norm for most next-generation card owners.

The single GPU is capable of hurling 480 million bilinear filtered, multi-textured

pixels around the screen each and every second (around 20 million *fewer* than the RAGE Fury MAXX), and four 32-bit 3D rendering pipelines can handle four texture mapped, lit pixels per clock cycle. This gives it the ability to create astonishingly realistic scenes and still have sufficient strength left over to animate them.

STREETS AHEAD

In tests, the GeForce 256 is *way* ahead of anything else currently on the market, even in lowly 32Mb form. Sure, ATI's newcomer gets its neck ahead with its dual RAGE PRO powered fill rate, but even the TNT2 Ultra and Voodoo3 3500 are punted sideways by the GeForce's low-down grunt in every other area. Lesser cards such as the old TNT and Voodoo2 are left floundering.

The GeForce also enables developers to use surfaces that are fully reflective in real time, with a software technique called cube environment mapping. The truly stunning live-rendered demo supplied with the card, *Dagoth Moor Zoological Gardens*, is so jaw-droppingly beautiful that we guarantee you'll drool over it time and time again.

The top-of-the-range chip, the DDR version, comes with ultra-fast memory with twice the RAM performance of the SDR model, so that's the model to aim for, although expect a price premium of between £50 and £100. While we're at it, wait for a 64Mb version with 0.18 micron technology which is sure to hit the market within the next quarter.

THE DETAILS

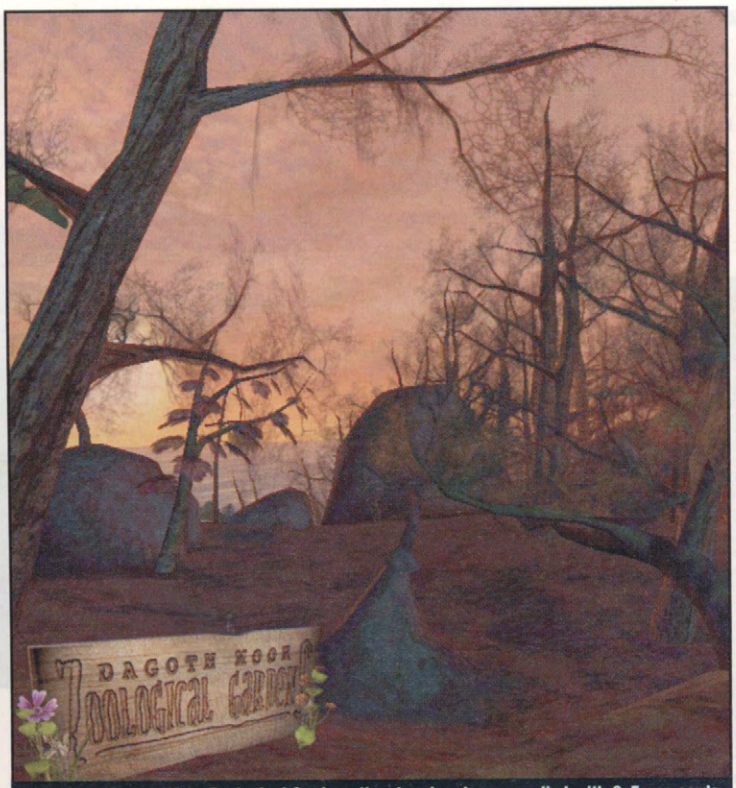
HARDWARE GeForce 256 GPU
MANUFACTURER NVIDIA Corporation
WEBSITE www.nvidia.com
OUT Imminent
PRICE £219

THE GOOD BITS

- 22m onboard transistors (a PIII has just 9m)
- 32Mb graphics memory, 350MHz RAMDAC
- Integrated transform and lighting (T&L) and triangle clipping
- Four 64-bit rendering pipelines, twice the capacity of the old TNT2
- 2D resolutions up to 2048 x 1536

THE BAD BITS

- 3Dfx waiting in the wings with the awesome VSA-100 Napalm
- You want the DDR memory version, which won't be around for some months
- 32Mb ain't enough. Stick around for the 64Mb and 128Mb versions



A still from *Dagoth Moor Zoological Gardens*, the stunning demo supplied with GeForce cards.


A texture brush measuring 2048 x 2048 pixels – more than *16* times the size the Voodoo3 is capable of processing. With texture compression, there's no need for an image of such quality to slow down frame rate or gobble memory.


That indistinct blurriness normally associated with 3D-accelerated games will become a thing of the past with larger textures and texture compression.

power. Indeed, in listing the card's bad points we were hard pushed to find even one of any real consequence.

The core clock should truck along at up to 200MHz and features hardware bump mapping, S3TC texture compression, 32-bit rendering, full scene anti-aliasing, specular lighting, diffuse shading, integrated transform and lighting (only the second card ever to do so), and compliance with OpenGL and DirectX 7. The card will also feature the world's first dual pixel/dual texture pipeline, and S3's Single Pass Quad Texturing enables game makers to improve on image quality even further.

Additionally, the Savage2000's rumoured price tag will put it in the inexpensive, high-end mainstream market, giving it a significant advantage over the rival GeForce. S3 also plan to use the 0.18 micron technology (that is still pending) in both the NVIDIA and 3Dfx ranges. Available in two versions, the standard Savage2000 features 166MHz memory with a 150MHz engine clock, and the Savage2000+ boasts 200MHz memory and a 200MHz engine clock. In terms of bandwidth – the actual amount of data the chip can shift around in any one moment – the Savage2000 is actually a length ahead of the VSA-100 Napalm, but a little behind the GeForce 256 and RAGE Fury MAXX.

MORE POLYGONS. SO WHAT?

In very simple terms, the 3D space that you move through in titles such as *System Shock 2* is rendered in filled polygons. The more polygons you can cram into a single game scene, the higher the level of complexity you can achieve, and thus step ever closer to real-world levels of realism.

Take the standard Gordon Freeman model in *Half-Life*. On close inspection it's a fairly simple and rather crude affair – a few boxy polygons painted with highly detailed graphical wallpaper. The moment you up the polygon count, you can start to add features such as a nose, chin, ears, blinking eyes, even hair. Combine this with larger, more elaborate textures, overlay lighting effects and put creases into his trousers when he walks, and you have a seriously real looking game model.

THE DETAILS

HARDWARE Savage2000+
MANUFACTURER S3 Inc.
WEBSITE www.s3.com
OUT February 2000
PRICE £149

THE GOOD BITS

- Single AGP card supports two separate displays
- Up to 64Mb graphics memory, 350MHz RAMDAC
- Integrated transform and lighting (T&L) with real-time anti-aliasing
- 32-bit rendering in true colour
- 2D resolutions up to 2048 x 1536

THE BAD BITS

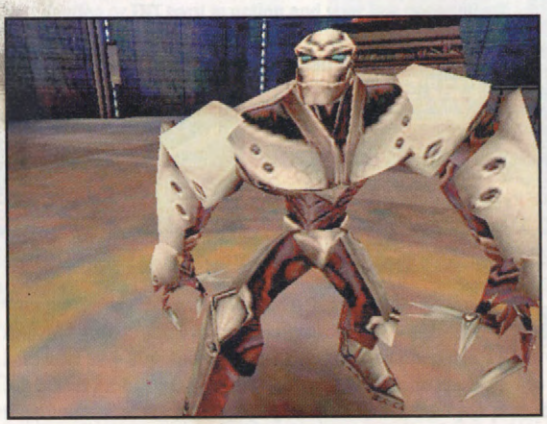
- The last Savage release was met with a wall of silence
- Not much else. The Savage2000 has the right price and the right kit

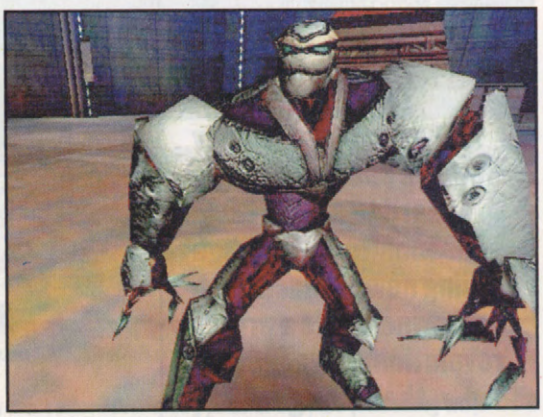


S3

No one batted an eyelid when S3 got excited about the Savage3D chipset. Can the upcoming Savage2000+ rekindle people's interests?

No doubt about it, the Savage 2000+ looks most able to tackle Voodoo head on and beat it at its own game – serious 3D game


Look, mum, no bump mapping!


Gosh. Who wants a card with bumps?

OPENGL

What it is and what it does

Championed by iD Software, OpenGL is now the worldwide standard for creating 3D games and applications. It incorporates a wide range of texture mapping, special effects and other rendering techniques, and enables game developers to write their code once – the OpenGL interface handles compliance with video hardware across all popular platforms from Windows to Linux. Some of OpenGl's current core functions are listed below.

ALPHA BLENDING
Using alpha information, 3D objects can be anything from totally transparent to totally opaque.

ANTI-ALIASING
A rendering method used to smooth lines and curves by averaging the colours of adjacent pixels.

DOUBLE BUFFERING
Smoothes animation of objects by rendering incomplete objects off screen and only allowing complete images to be seen by the user.

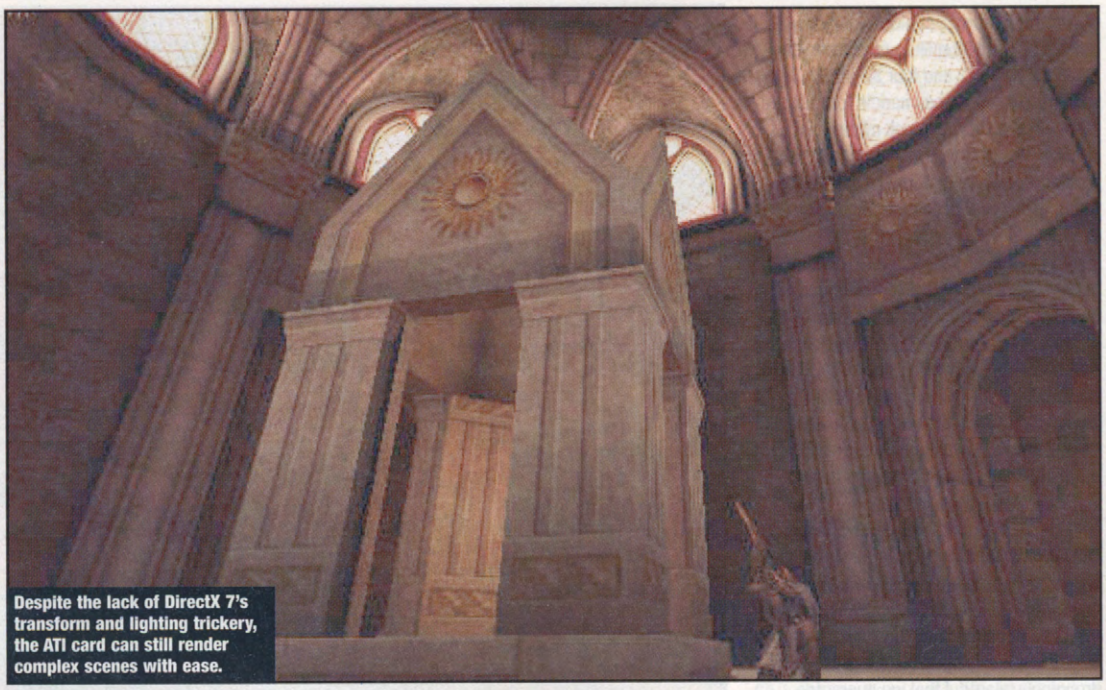
GOURAUD SHADING
Smooth interpolation across a polygon or line segment.

TEXTURE MAPPING
The process of applying a 2D wallpaper image to a polygonal object.

Z-BUFFERING
Used for hidden surface removal, a Z-buffer is used to keep track of whether one part of an object is further away from the viewer than another.

New features in OpenGL version 1.2 take advantage of new cards and include specialised light textures as well as various functions to encompass bump mapping and specular (ie mirror) highlights. www.opengl.org

"The DualHead display feature enables a single card to support two monitors. Although nothing new to Macintosh owners, it's a pretty revolutionary gadget for the home gamer"



Despite the lack of DirectX 7's transform and lighting trickery, the ATI card can still render complex scenes with ease.



ATI

They're the world's largest supplier of graphics cards, but can ATI put up a good enough fight to see off the likes of 3Dfx and NVIDIA?

Known in some circles as the Aurora, RAGE Fury MAXX shows that ATI are getting serious about the accelerator market. And they need to, because early RAGE Furys were renowned for ultra-buggy drivers and screwing test systems. So together with the oh-so-secret RAGE 6 chip, which must surely match the performance of the 3Dfx range when it's released late in 2000, the MAXX should really put ATI back on the 3D accelerator map.

The new card is an impressive bit of kit. At its heart are two 125MHz RAGE PROs, nailed down side by side on a single board with AFR technology. This gives the card a high fill rate and colossal memory bandwidth. With two cores chugging along at 125MHz and two dedicated frame buffers running at 143MHz, its performance isn't that far away from the GeForce 256. In fact, in terms of fill rate, the RAGE Fury MAXX actually has an edge over that mighty NVIDIA card.

OLD WINE, NEW BOTTLE

What's a little disappointing about the ATI card is that it lacks some of the most important technological advances. Yes, it does include tricks such as bump mapping and anti-aliasing, but transform and lighting remains absent. This is the system that dramatically enhances a game's photorealism, for example by enabling creatures to move more naturally, complete with flowing hair and creased clothes, and light to fall realistically on complex objects such as trees or flowers. What this means for you is that games played on a Fury MAXX will look a whole lot less authentic than, say, when played on an identical system with a GeForce 256.

However, all is not lost. Given a suitable leap in processing power, it's quite feasible that the complex scenes handled by the NVIDIA card's internal T&L engine could instead be handled by the CPU in Fury MAXX systems. Remember, all these 3D gizmos are there to ease the strain on your motherboard, but if your motherboard is beefy enough to take the punishment then the strength of your graphics card isn't quite so vital.

THE DETAILS

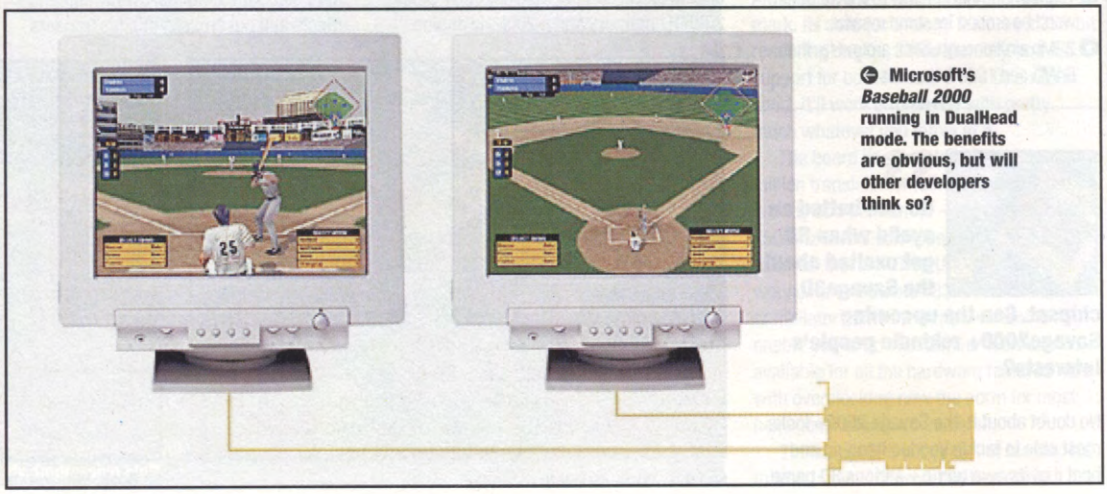
HARDWARE RAGE Fury MAXX
MANUFACTURER ATI Technologies
WEBSITE www.ati.com
OUT January 2000
PRICE £199

THE GOOD BITS

- Dual 125MHz RAGE PRO chips on a single board
- 32Mb graphics memory dedicated to each chip
- AFR technology to raise fill rates and bandwidth
- 32-bit rendering
- 2D resolutions up to 1920 x 1200

THE BAD BITS

- RAGE Fury drivers were dreadful. Will future versions be any better?
- The MAXX is really just a potpourri of current technology
- RAGE branding pales alongside the likes of TNT and Voodoo



Microsoft's *Baseball 2000* running in DualHead mode. The benefits are obvious, but will other developers think so?



MATROX

Although the Matrox G400 MAX has been available for a few months now, DualHead games are still thin on the ground. Can two monitors be the way forward?

Unique to the Millennium G400 series, the DualHead display feature enables a single card to support two separate monitors. Although nothing new to Macintosh owners (the MacOS has supported a similar system for around 15 years), it's a pretty revolutionary gadget for the home gamer. You can also plug in your lounge telly and use that as the secondary display.

But why, you ask, is this of any use? Well, stop a minute and consider the benefits of two monitors. In a strategy game such as *Red Alert*, you could gain a significant advantage in being able to see twice the area of ground as you could see before. In an action game such as *Unreal Tournament*, you could have one monitor keeping an eye on your team-mates.

BRING ON THE GAMES

It's a nice idea, and already there are a number of developers knocking out titles that take advantage of the funky DualHead system, with *Extreme Wing Chun VR*, *Baseball 2000*, *Off Road* and *Descent 3* being fine examples. Our only worry is that it'll simply turn into just another nice idea that very few people are aware of and even fewer actually use, because it doesn't have the 3Dfx logo on it. This is exactly what happened to the Gravis UltraSound, a tremendous old sound card that was doomed from the outset because it wasn't a Sound Blaster.

The G400's other features, such as a 360MHz RAMDAC and bump mapping, lift the card from the crowd but don't endow it with sufficient stamina to win a fight against any of the other competitors mentioned here. The Voodoo5 will no doubt be more potent and more compatible, the Savage2000 should be at a better price, the RAGE Fury MAXX is faster, and the GeForce 256 more feature-packed. There's also a question mark hanging over OpenGL compatibility – Matrox's own literature makes no mention of what is now the de facto standard for accelerated games.

THE DETAILS

HARDWARE G400 MAX DualHead
MANUFACTURER Matrox
WEBSITE www.matrox.com
OUT Now
PRICE £250

THE GOOD BITS

- Single AGP card supports two separate displays
- 32Mb graphics memory, 360MHz RAMDAC
- Environment-mapped bump mapping
- 32-bit rendering with Vibrant Color Quality enhancement
- 2D resolutions up to 2048 x 1536

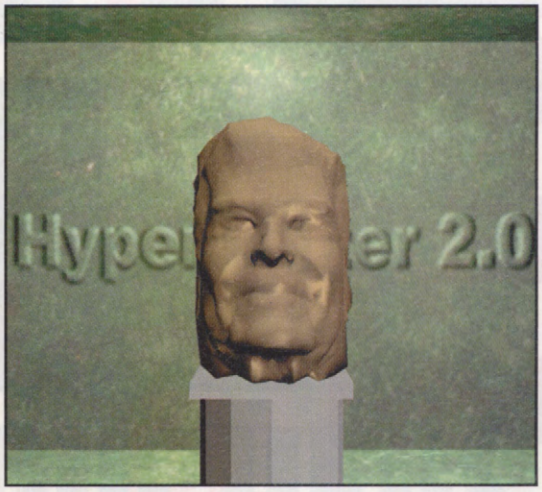
FUN WITH PHYSICS

A powerful graphics card is a must if you intend to enter the brave new world of HyperMatter

Unthinkable only a couple of years ago, HyperMatter is a real-time physics-based animation system for your PC that enables objects to be rendered with 'real world' physical properties. The downloadable, fully functional demos show how calculations and soft reflections bring any scene to life; they also prove the value of having a beefy graphics card, as such mathematics *really* thrashes your processor.
www.hypermatter.demon.co.uk



Pick up a big letter 'H' and bounce it around a virtual room.



Squeeze, twist and twang Ronnie Reagan's head.

DIRECTX 7

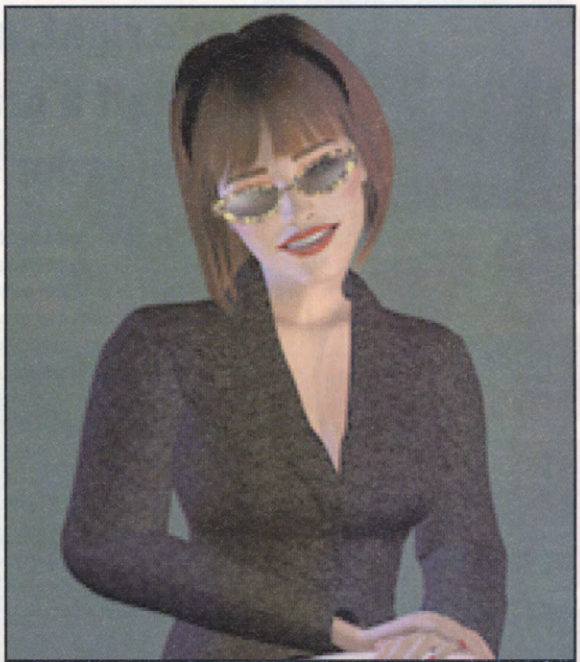
The buzz you got from first seeing a Voodoo or TNT card in action is here again with Direct

Microsoft DirectX is the graphics and multimedia API built into every Windows operating system. It gives game developers access to a broad range of hardware without the need to adapt their code to suit the hundreds of different video and sound card combinations. The most widely available version, v6, handles techniques such as environment-map bump mapping (you see it in titles such as *Spirit Of Speed*, where it's used extensively on the road surfaces), but not in the latest, more advanced stuff.

DirectX version 7 introduces faster and better 3D visuals, better audio reproduction and, most importantly, support for transform and lighting (T&L). This means that the NVIDIA GeForce 256 and S3 Savage2000+ will take the weight off your CPU and enable it to concentrate on more complex artificial intelligence routines and physics calculations. Curiously, 3Dfx's VSA-100 chip makes no mention of T&L technology.

What this means is that if you have a game that uses DirectX 7 features to its full, and you're running it on a fully DirectX 7 compliant card such as the S3 Savage2000, you'll be in for a stunning ride. Remember the time you saw your first Voodoo or TNT card in action and your jaw bounced off your beer gut? Here we go again...

Visit the Microsoft site to download the latest version and learn more.
www.microsoft.com/directx



Fully animated, this woman gesticulates with astonishing realism – even her hair flops about as her head moves from side to side. This is just the sort of thing you can expect from cards fully compatible with DirectX 7.

MONEY MONEY MONEY

Something for the millionaires among you

Won the lottery? May we suggest a Quantum3D AAlchemy card? It features an improbable 32 – yes, that is indeed 32 – 3Dfx full-featured VSA-100 Napalm chips, 2Gb of video RAM, 100Gb/second bandwidth, and capacity for 3.2 billion 32-bit, quad-sampled AA pixels each second.
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www.quantum3d.com

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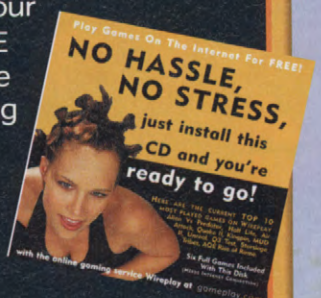
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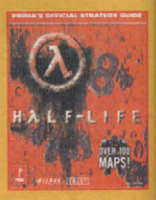
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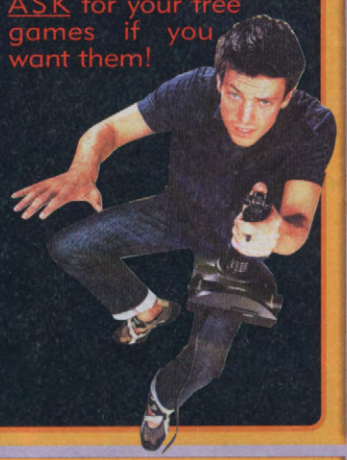


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3D Shooter



Set across 4 different time zones, from ancient Greece to futuristic Japan, each with their own individual weaponry, enemies and missions, Daikatana aims to reinvent the 3D genre. Incredibly varied weapons and a strong plot with an incredible time travelling story will leave you breathless.



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Unreal Tournament — £23.99 rrp 34.99

3D shooter



Designed to recreate the thrill of multiplayer gaming for one player, it has advanced artificial intelligence to simulate playing against devious human opponants. New modes of play include Capture the Flag and Assault, where players have to defend or attack a fortress. 35 brand new arenas, 3 new weapons and numerous snenarios to increase replay value. You can program how you want your computer controlled adversaries to react or behave when their getting beaten to easily. A perfect game for polishing your first person shooter prowess.

(Demo on our free online gaming Cd)





Half-Life Opposing Force — £18.99 rrp 24.99

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An official expansion pack for the best selling Half Life, Opposing Force casts you as one of the government soldiers. A new alien race has appeared amid the chaos, and it is down to you to deal with this deadly threat. Opposing Force shows you Half Life from a whole new angle!

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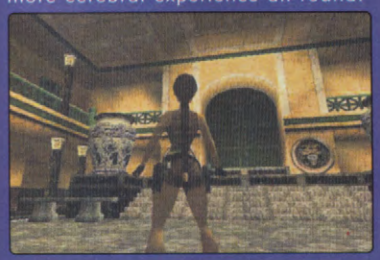
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Tomb Raider 4
3D Adventure — £27.99 rrp 34.99

Once again Lara Croft is chest deep in trouble, as she uncovers an ancient prophecy regarding the alignment of the stars at the millennium, which surely spells trouble for the rest of the world. Lucky she's about really. Set entirely in Egypt, and shifting away from the gun blazing action of the last two instalments, The Last Revelation returns to the puzzle solving and exploration of the original, making for a more cerebral experience all round.





Indiana Jones 'The Infernal Machine'
3D Adventure — £25.99 rrp 34.99









The greatest adventurer in the world is back and on his most dangerous mission yet. Pieces of an ancient machine have been uncovered by the Russians, and they plan to use its incredible power for their own nefarious means. Once again it falls to Indy to don his Fedora hat and trusty bullwhip, and try and keep one step ahead of the vile communists. A globe trotting adventure of epic proportions, The Infernal Machine could be the trickiest challenge that Dr. Jones has ever faced.

Baldurs Gate & Tales from the Sword Coast
Roleplaying Adventure — £14.99 rrp 54.98



Traverse a huge landscape as you uncover your secret past. The story unfolds across 7 huge chapters, with missions and sub-plots. Guide your party of up to 5 players or enlist some help from allies on the internet. And if that's not enough then plunge yourself into more perilous missions with Tales from the Sword Coast, the official add-on chapter. (Not for the faint hearted)

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Diablo II
Roleplaying Adventure — £27.99 rrp 34.99



One of the most eagerly anticipated games of all time is almost with us! Diablo brought role playing to the masses, with its easy to use controls and addictive gameplay, and Diablo 2 looks set to continue that tradition. With 4 separate acts spread across 4 CDs, 5 playable characters, a host of new spells, and an intricate plot with quests and sub quests to tackle, Diablo 2 is going to be a devil of a game.



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ON THE CD

This month we've got the incredible *Quake III Arena* and *SWAT 3*, plus the usual fab selection of patches and stuff

WORDS Mark Hill **DISCMEISTER** Daniel Emery

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CD-ROM HELP Phone ABT on 01708 250250 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, **or email pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk**. Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
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- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- **You need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.**
- **Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.**
- **Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.**

ON THE CD DEMOS + SHAREWARE



QUAKE III ARENA

Activision

WORLD EXCLUSIVE



Big guns, epic battles... Can ya dig it?

You've probably never heard of this one. It's a game, you run around, you shoot things, you completely forget that the world around you exists as your adrenalin reaches OD levels. It's a bit good. It's *Quake III*. We always knew it was going to be massive and we always knew it would be tremendous multiplayer fun. The question was: will a deathmatch-only single-player game be good enough? And, of course, how will it compare to *Unreal Tournament*? Well, you can either read our definitive review (page 84) or fire up this exclusive demo and find out for yourself.

There are four maps for you to battle your way through against bots that can be piss-poor or sickeningly good, depending on what level you can stomach them. As a frightening insight into the minds of *PCZONE*, we can tell you that we played DM17, also known as the 'jumpy level', until our pupils went into epileptic fits. It's the only demo we've played non-stop in the office. Until we got hold of the full version, that is. So, install the *UT* demo from last issue. Do the same with this one. Play them both to death. Decide which one you want to buy. We can't make it any easier for you than that.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard



We can be heroes, just for one day...

SWAT 3: CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE

Sierra

EXCLUSIVE

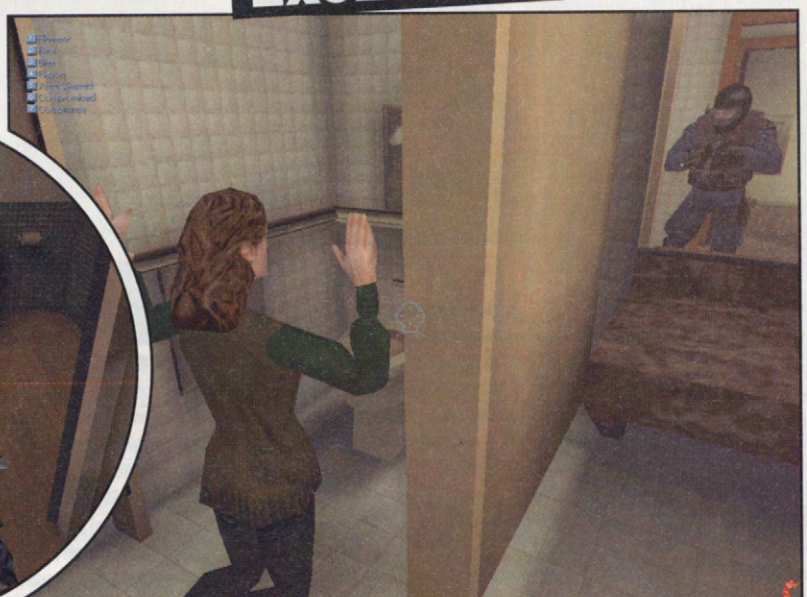
While everyone is still blabbing on about *Hidden & Dangerous* and *Rogue Spear*, *SWAT 3* has crept in through the side entrance in stealth mode and taken control of the situation. The graphics are absolutely wonderful, but you won't even notice them once you're sucked into the engrossing gameplay. If you've ever wanted to boss people about, this is the game for you.

You command a team of highly trained officers through an extremely intuitive interface, telling them where to go and what attitude to adopt. The mission in this demo has a group of kidnappers using a shop as cover for their operations. Break in, kill or arrest the terrorists and rescue the hostage. Sound easy? Well, remember it's different every time you play. You might start shooting straight away, or not find any enemies until you've sneaked down into the cellar. Pure tactical class.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard



"Hey, they're playing Radiohead downstairs."



"Don't move! I've dropped a contact lens. If you help me find it I'll clean your weapon for you."

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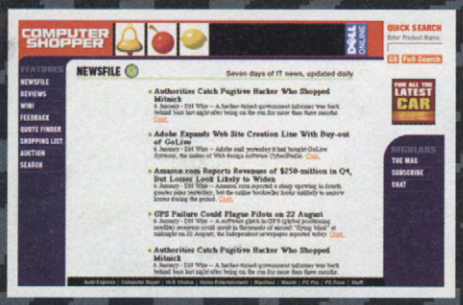
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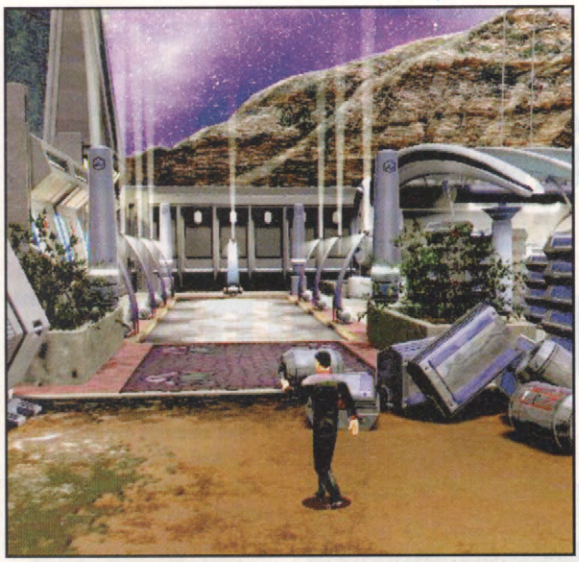
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STAR TREK: HIDDEN EVIL

Activision

Set on the same planet as *Insurrection*, but six months later, *Hidden Evil* expands the film's plot with the introduction of forgotten alien races, weird devices and so on. You take on the role of a young ensign helping out Captain Picard and Data (voiced by the series' actors), shooting, interacting with characters and solving puzzles. If action/adventures done in the *Trek* style are your package, you'll find plenty to get excited about here.

Controls: Keyboard

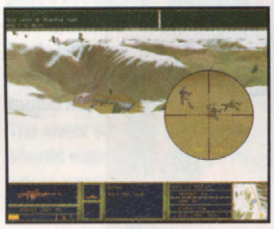


URBAN CHAOS

Eidos Interactive

More action/adventuring as you try to rid a city of crime and violence by – you guessed it – using loads of violence of your own. Shooting, punching, kicking and driving are all part of the explosive experience. You might notice a touch of *Tomb Raider*-ing about the whole thing, but the city setting and the ordinary citizens make *Urban Chaos* surprisingly refreshing.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard



DELTA FORCE 2

Novalogic

If you find that *SWAT 3* makes you think too much, you might prefer *Delta Force*'s more straightforward approach. As with any military tactical game, you have a bunch of compadres to help you wipe out the opposition. There's no control over your team-mates, just the shoot-everything-in-sight gameplay more common to FPSs, in a real-world setting, and with a choice of first and third-person views.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

ON THE CD EDITORIAL

We couldn't fit this stuff anywhere else, so we've put it here

CM3 update

Savio's *Championship Manager 3* updates are widely recognised as the best available on the Web. Here is the latest one, which includes transfers of players you've never heard of, and even teams and countries you've never heard of. It should keep you going if you don't want to fork out for *CM99/00*, anyway.

Hot Shots

Here are some beautiful shots for you to inject into your eyes, via your PC. This month we've got *Dukes Of Hazzard*, *Warcraft III* and *Parsec*.

ON THE CD PATCHES

Don't miss out on all the new patches that have been released. See our CD browser for explanations of what they do

Abomination v2.6.4
Age Of Empires II
Age Of Wonders v1.1
AMA Superbike 1.4
Diplomacy v1.1
Dungeon Keeper II 1.61
Flanker 2.0 v2.01
Freespace 2 v1.20
Half-Life: Opposing Force 1.0.0.1
Homeworld v1.04
Nerf Arena Blast v1.1
Panzer Elite v1.07
Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear v2.05
Shadow Company v1.3
Sinistar Unleashed
Spec Ops II v1.1.1
The Settlers III v1.54
Warzone 2100 v1.10



SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

Infogrames

Games don't get any more spectacular than this faithful recreation of throwing yourself down a snowy mountain armed with nothing more than a plank beneath your feet. What raises *Supreme Snowboarding* above the usual fashionable teenage fare is the sheer feeling of exhilaration you get while racing down the slopes, and that's all that matters.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard



THE LONGEST JOURNEY

Funcom

The last of a dying breed? You won't get many chances to play point 'n' click adventures in the future, especially ones with the wonderfully detailed graphics and epic storyline that developers Funcom have injected into this title. There are different dimensions to explore and hundreds of characters to talk to, making this game live up to its title like few others.

Controls: Mouse



FIFA 2000

Electronic Arts

This is a new version of the demo you played last month, adding new, improved commentary and lots of hidden tweaks. It's everyone's favourite footie game, and if you haven't played a FIFA game in recent years we suggest that you try it out. You'll be a fan for life, honest.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard



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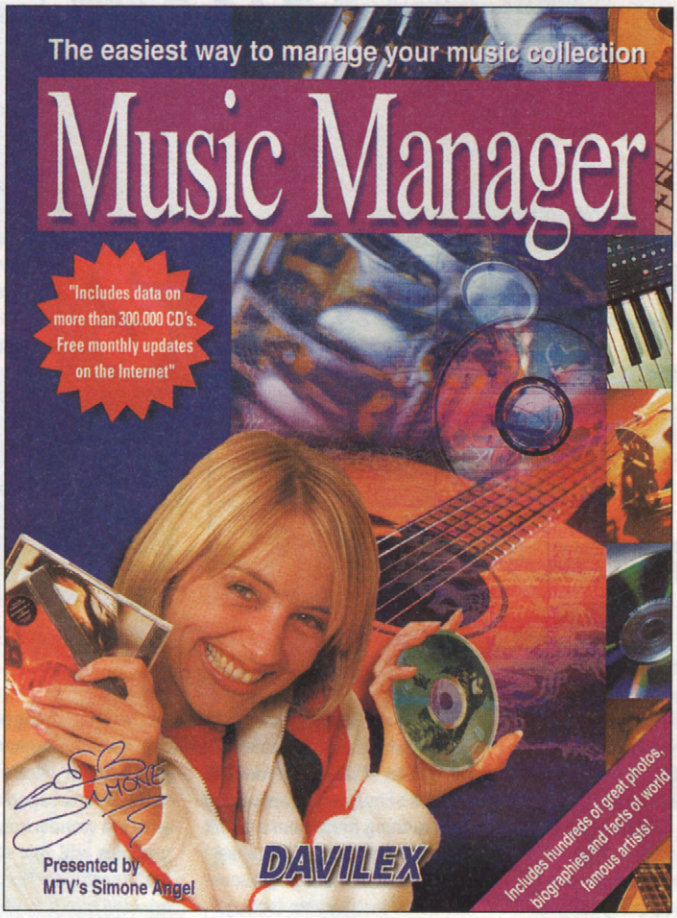
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DirectX 7.0
Microsoft's latest drivers for most Windows 95/98 games.

TreeSize Professional v2.2
A powerful and flexible hard disk manager

EZDesk 1.8
Saves the position of your Windows 95/98 desktop shortcuts and folders.

Hypersnap-DX Pro v3.52.00
The latest screen-capture utility, which can cope with DirectX/Direct 3D and 3Dfx modes.

SciTech Display Doctor v6.53
The latest release of the universal graphics card utility.

Winzip 7.0
The ultimate zip utility for Windows.

Ameol v2.52
Brand new software for the excellent online service that is CIX.

Kali95 1.68
Latest version of the client software for playing games over the Internet.

GetRight 4.1.1
Salvage broken downloads. New version.

ICQ 99b beta v 3.19 Build #2569
Client software for the best online chat service in the world.

MPlayer
Excellent free online gaming software

DUN Manager 1.2c
Simplify and enhance Dial-Up Networking and Remote Access Terminal

FTP Explorer 1.0010
Explorer-type FTP interface

Roger Wilco Mk1.1a
A virtual walkie-talkie app that runs alongside your favourite multiplayer online games

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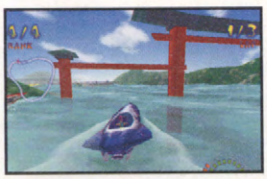
mIRC 5.6
Latest version of the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) software.

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NeoTrace 2.11
A high-speed graphical traceroute with integrated who is and ping.

PingTool 2.5a
Helps you find the best online game servers on the Internet.



JETBOAT SUPERCHAMPS

Fiendish Games

Jetboat Superchamps does for boat racing what *Supreme Snowboarding* does for, er, snowboarding. Gorgeous graphics and an incredible sense of speed combine with no-nonsense racing. Just watch the boat glide over the water and you'll almost believe it's real.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard



SID MEIER'S ANTIETAM

Firaxis

If you enjoyed Sid's *Gettysburg* strategy game, then this revisitation to more American historical bloodshed should set your red stuff racing. The battles take place on huge rotateable and zoomable maps, with massive regiments slaughtering each other for a parcel of land. Who said that war is senseless?

Controls: Mouse

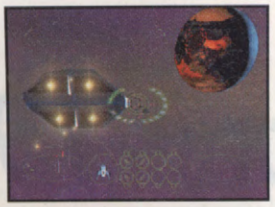


BIG BANG

Project2 Interactive

There are never too many space combat sims, and when they look as good as this one we should all count ourselves lucky. Colourful, arcadey blasting action is the order of the game, with lots of alien races, a dynamic mission campaign, and cunning enemy AI. The title evokes names of wrestlers rather than theories about the beginning of the universe, but then *Space Invaders* always was something of a no-brainer.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard

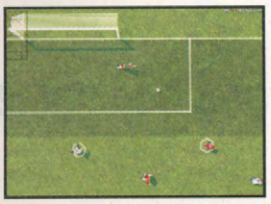


PHOENIX

Hasbro

More space blasting, this time from Team 17, the makers of the classic *Worms* series. Set in the middle of the new millennium, you take the role of Beck, a police officer in charge of saving the universe. There are loads of missions, and you progress through different routes depending on your skill. The sheer scale of this game should make it a winner with space combat fans.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard



TOTAL SOCCER 2000

Iridion

Anybody remember *Sensible World Of Soccer*? Of course you do. And chances are you still dream of a return to the days when playability ruled above graphics and the ball didn't stick to your player's feet. Well, wake up and start playing *Total Soccer 2000*. The players might be absolutely tiny, but with the exorbitant resolutions supported you'll still make the most of your ninja PC.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard



LEGO RACERS

LEGO Media

No, don't laugh. The small, square-shouldered people make it on to the race track and give *Mario Kart 64* a run for its money. If nothing else you can cast a fond eye on those Lego-loving childhood memories. And you don't have to build them first.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard

ACES HIGH

HiTech Creations

Online high flyers will be delighted with this new version of the WWII flight sim. Anyone who's flown against real people in the past will know that AI is nothing compared to shooting down a living, thinking being. Or, if you can't find any of those, Americans will do just fine. NB: If the game won't start properly then you may need to have a joystick plugged in.

Controls: Joystick/keyboard



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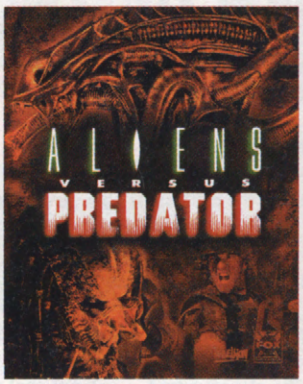
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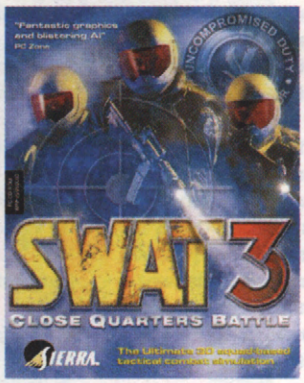
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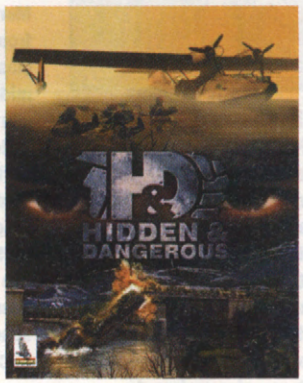
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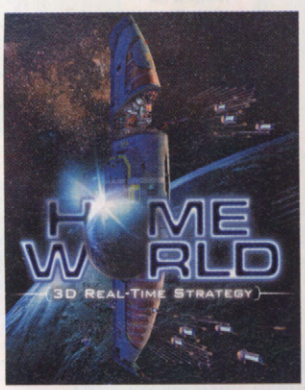


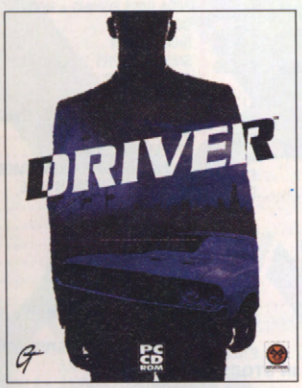


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THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO...

"We will soon see a myriad of cool new types of games that can only be created online"

RICHARD GARRIOT, ORIGIN

The future according to the games developers that shape it (well, some of it). Holding up the crystal balls: *Paul Presley*

The future. Cities on the moon. Personal space podules in every backyard. Silver Bacofoil on every backside. *Daikatana* out in time for Christmas. The future is littered with the failed predictions of the past, mainly because the people making those predictions are rarely the ones that create the reality. Unless you picked up the Cantonese or Hebrew version of this issue, you'll have already read what *we* think the next year or so holds for virtual reality computer gaming on the IBM PC and compatibles platform. But what do we know? Have we ever coded an AI routine, modelled an alien in 3D or fiddled with the size of Lara Croft's tits? No, we're just ignorant text monkeys with access to a thesaurus, filling in time before we die.

No, if you really want to know what's going to happen you've got to ask people on the front line. The ones that invest years of their lives in the games you take for granted. The ones that are actually Doing. It. So we asked. 20 of the buggers. Developers that have, so far, shaped the course of gaming, and those in the process of doing so for the future. We asked them all the same questions, partly to get as comprehensive an answer as possible about what shape PC gaming is going to take in the future, and partly because it's easier to forward the same email to 20 people than come up with new questions every time.

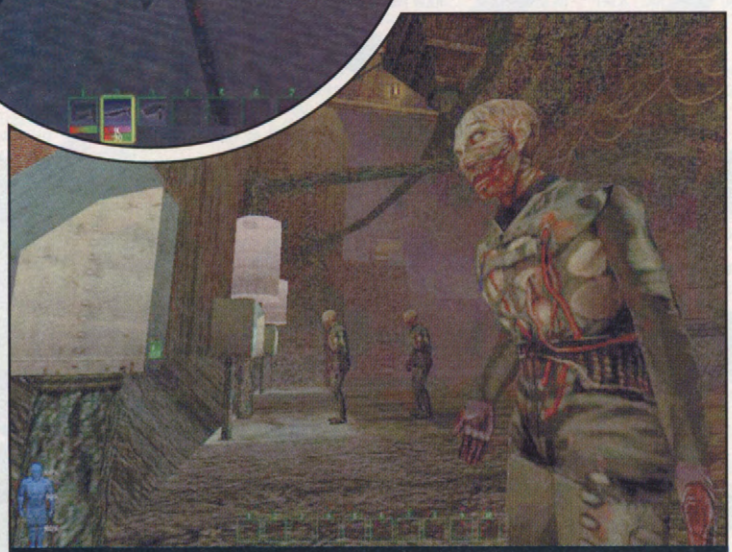
So what does the future hold? Does the PC have a future? Or will it, like the Atari Jaguar, Glenn Hoddle and Milton Keynes, be consigned to the scrapheap of history as no more than a Good Idea At The Time? Here, in no particular order, is what our industry thinks...



RON GILBERT CAVEDOG ENTERTAINMENT

One of the big names of gaming history, Gilbert gave us the seminal *Monkey Island* series

How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
I think it's got quite a few years left. The console machines are becoming more powerful, but they still attract a very different audience, and therefore have a very different style of game being played on them. Because PCs aren't in the middle of the living room, people tend to play deeper, more complex and longer lasting games. Console games are also viewed as toys for kids, and non-gaming adults are not going to play games on consoles. They might on a PC however.


An action epic from Ron Gilbert's Cavedog, *Amen: The Awakening* boasts some of the largest levels ever seen in a 3D action game. Aircraft carriers built to scale, for instance.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
Not very much. PC hardware will be pushed by console hardware and vice versa, but they really are very different markets.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
Online gaming is going to get even bigger for the hardcore players, but I really hope we see a real explosion in the more causal gamer audience. The PC games market simply cannot survive with just a bunch of first-person shooters and nothing but 3D tech demo games. We must expand our reach to non-gamers and older gamers.



What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Stop designing games for just 12 year-old boys (or adults that wish they were 12-year-old boys). TV, film and music are socially acceptable because they hit *all* age ranges and have a huge diversity in styles. Games do not. Once they do, it will be as normal as going to the movies.

MIKE DISKETT MUCKY FOOT PRODUCTIONS

Having recently completed *Urban Chaos*, the Bullfrog breakaways are already making a name for themselves



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
PCs look like they'll last forever, at least in offices and for home workers, so there'll always be a few sales there. But I think the sales of PC games are going to steadily dwindle away over the next few years. PC games may survive under another guise – the Microsoft X-Box. This is the mystery console that's a PC, complete with hard drive and modem, but plugs into your telly and is used like a nice friendly console. If this catches on, then supporting the PC will be more likely, as X-Box and PC development will be pretty much identical.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
The PlayStation 2 is going to be capable of better visuals than the best PC for at least two years. So there's going to be quite a long period where PC gamers either spend £200 upgrading their machine (and still be inferior), or they can buy a PS2. This has got to hurt the PC gaming community. I guess the Quake-heads will struggle on (I'm one myself... when I have time). But what if ID move over to consoles? Strangely, one of the biggest strengths of the PC is that it comes with a mouse, giving it the input control for many games. Try Quake on a PlayStation, it's worse than organic Bran Flakes.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
In terms of revenue, games are making more money than movies or music. (I don't know where it all goes but apparently it's true. I must ask Mr Molyneux next time I'm round at his mansion). Yet we're still treated as nerdy kids who never quite grew up. The public perception of gaming is down to the marketing of consoles. When did a PC manufacturer spend £100 million trying to make PC gaming cool? Hopefully, the trend towards gaming as a cool activity will continue, but how can we compete with Demi Moore or All Saints on the glamour front? Our icons are Lara and, er, John Carmack.


Urban Chaos is the first game to arrive on the scene from Mucky Foot, a sprawling futuristic epic set in a fully working city.

BILL ROPER BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

Blizzard are renowned for taking their time to get it right. The *Starcraft*, *Warcraft* and *Diablo* ranges are all testament to this, with a third, *Warcraft*, already on the way



The hugely popular *Warcraft* series is set to enter its third incarnation in 2000, continuing the effective mix of strategy, fantasy and gore.



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
The PC is a platform that is still in a solid growth phase and we, as developers, are looking to it to become even more prominent as the power, graphic capabilities and storage capabilities continue to increase. At the same time, Internet accessibility is on the rise, making the dream of connecting the entire world as a gaming community, a reality.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
We should see developers continue to push what they can get the consoles to do, not only in terms of graphics and sound, but also in connectivity with other gamers. I think the real challenge will be to create a game that is equally compelling on both PCs and consoles, and then find a way to have all of those different gamers play together.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
The vast increases in end-user technology. The combination of faster Internet connection, more powerful computers, higher end graphics and sound – all for a relatively low price – will mean that more people than ever will be able to experience the very best that gaming has to offer in the best possible setting.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
When you stop and think about how many more people in the world have yet to be exposed to, or have purchased, a computer, the potential market staggers the mind. What we as developers need to do, is to focus on creating top quality product that is accessible to the masses without 'talking down' to them. If someone sees your game, they shouldn't need to read a 100-page manual and play through a dozen tutorials before they can really get into playing. Making games simple to get into, and then teaching advanced concepts throughout the course of the game, is essential if you want to reach new gamers.



JANE JENSEN SIERRA STUDIOS

Jensen is best known for creating the *Gabriel Knight* series of adventure games. The third in the series, in whizzo 3D, was reviewed last issue



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
I don't think anyone knows. There is some speculation that eventually PCs will go away, but I have yet to see the box that will kill it. It took a long time for the market to buy into PCs and I think it will take a long time for them to go away. I think it's quite possible that another platform *could* take over from the computer, if it could truly outperform the PC and it were cheap enough for the transition not to be too painful for users. It also depends on what platforms the games manufacturers develop for. Players will go where the killer software is.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
The technological abilities of the platform will shape the games to some extent. And we may see a merging of traditional console 'style' with PC-style gameplay and feel.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
I think the kinds of products that people buy. Where will the next big hit come from and on what platform? Mega-sellers start a new direction in the industry (and a slew of imitators). Hopefully it will be something fresh – because we need it.

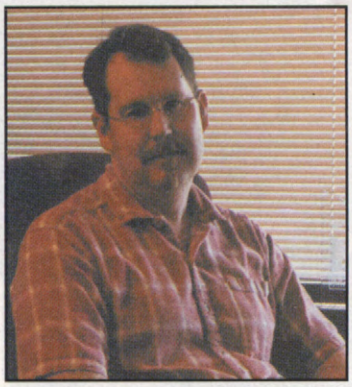
What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
This isn't going to happen as long as shooters are the predominant product. Most view games either as the platform games their kids play on Nintendo, or as Quake or Doom-type PC shooters. It's not exactly 'high art'. Part of the reason these types of games are so prominent in the gaming industry is audience demographics. I think that as the Internet gets more involved with story-based gaming, you may see more 'X-Files'-type games being done interactively – products that involve better writing and more interesting content. This may help win over a more mature audience.



Jane Jensen's occult investigator Gabriel Knight, continues his adventures – this time in a new 3D engine, and with lips straight out of *Thunderbirds*.

BRIAN UPTON RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT

Red Storm burst onto our monitors with the ground-breaking *Rainbow Six* a year or so ago. Since then, the rise in squad-based shooters has continued

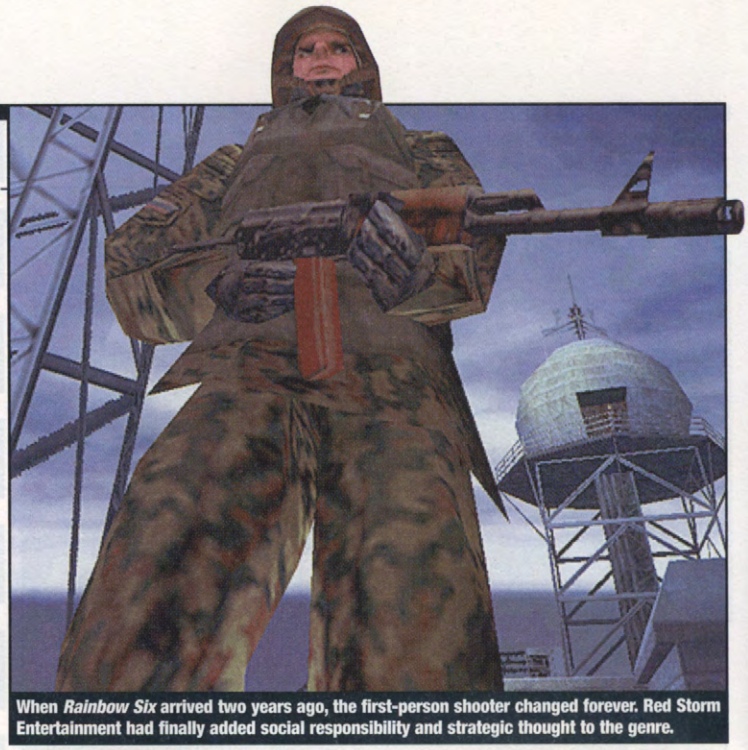


How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
We're soon to see the convergence of home computers, gaming systems, digital radio, cable TV and home telephony into a single system. Strangely enough, I don't think this will affect PC games very much. The reason is that the workstation metaphor is too powerful. Console games are designed around a theatre metaphor – they're designed to play well on a large screen that you're sitting some distance away from. Not for writing email, surfing the Web or paying bills. There will always be a demand for home workstations, which means there will always be a platform for the sort of games that require the intimacy of a workstation.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
I wouldn't be surprised if we see a lot of the action games migrate away from the PC. The only advantages to playing an action game on a PC are online connectivity and screen resolution. The former is being fixed by the next generation consoles and the latter will be taken care of by HDTV.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
The most important technological developments over the next year will probably be universal 3D acceleration. This year saw the first release of 3D games that required hardware acceleration. Over the next year or so I think we'll start seeing 3D graphics creeping into what are essentially 2D games, simply because the hardware is there and free to use.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Get more girls to play games. Games are targeted mostly at teenage boys. Until we get more girls and women involved there's always going to be some perception that games are for dorky losers who can't get a date. Also, make games more social. I've met lots of people who think *You Don't Know Jack* is the best game ever made. Finally, make games easier. Most people don't want to be challenged by their entertainment. This is why professional wrestling matches are better attended than poetry readings.



When *Rainbow Six* arrived two years ago, the first-person shooter changed forever. Red Storm Entertainment had finally added social responsibility and strategic thought to the genre.

GRAEME DEVINE ID SOFTWARE

id need no introduction. Without *Doom* or *Quake*, we wouldn't *have* a games industry. Almost



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
Golly. I think it will always be out in front in some way or another because it's so flexible. There's the PlayStation 2, which will undoubtedly be a very good gaming and entertainment platform, but by the time it arrives the PC will be ahead of it in terms of RAM and power. Typically, the PC in the home is the device connected to the Internet, and so online games will still stand out on that device before they do any other. As the line smudges between the PC and the devices throughout the rest of the home, then the lead will become less distinct.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
Clearly the development effort is much larger on these next-level consoles, so we'll see more crossover between the PC and the console in terms of polygon models and artwork. If a console starts to use OpenGL as its graphics API, then I believe we'll see concurrent development with some PC titles.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
Faster Internet connections, more network savvy operating systems and better game designs. Quicker Internet connections will mean better gaming because, as latency drops, your experience improves. Having the OS aware that it will spend most of its time on a network instead of being an island will mean cleaner access and simpler setup (Windows 2000 does this). And better game designs always help!

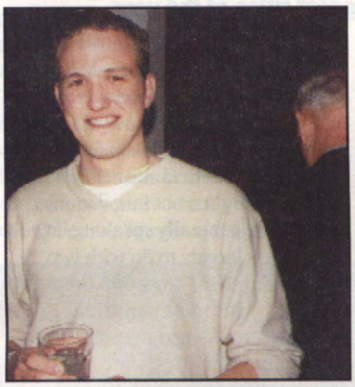
What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Maturity. We're a 20-year-old industry. When television was 20 years old, people in movies scoffed at it ever being able to compete with the film experience. We're just beginning to bang the bricks together here, game design-wise. We've yet to make the gaming equivalent of *The Wizard of Oz*, and when we do, we'll be on the yellow brick road forever.



If *Doom* was the granddaddy of 3D shooters, *Quake* was certainly the very popular uncle that comes round at Christmas with tenners for all the kids. *Quake III* is the latest and most eagerly awaited incarnation.

ALEX GARDEN RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

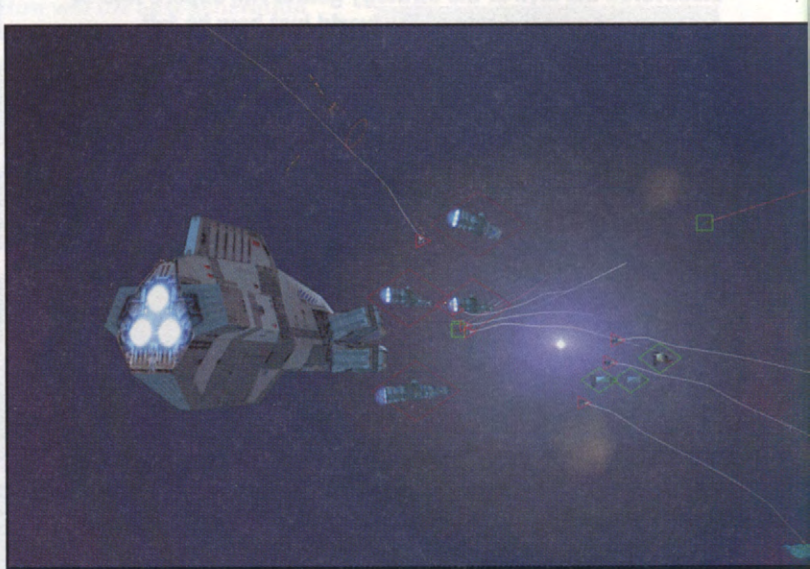
Canadian developers Relic recently unleashed the stunning *Homeworld* onto an amazed public, practically reinventing the real-time strategy genre in the process



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
Well, this is somewhat misleading in the sense that the PC has never had (and probably never will have), a 'present state'. The nature of the PC is that it is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the market. For instance, the PC was never designed to be a gaming platform, but regardless, a huge industry has grown up around gaming on the PC because the market demanded it. I think that in the next ten years, we're going to see a dramatic shift in what we think of as a PC. They're also going to get smaller, faster and become more integrated into our lives, up to the point where we don't really notice them anymore.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
In the last few years, the PC has driven the development of the console in terms of graphical gooiness. The consoles have always had a younger target audience given their ease of use, and I think the PC market has been watching this closely, looking for ways to cater to this market as well. Also, the consoles have typically had a simpler, more effective control mechanism in the joypad that the PC market has been slow to adopt.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
This is really difficult to say because technology changes so fast and I'm usually surprised at the directions the industry goes in. However, I think that two really safe bets will be better sound and more widespread high-speed Internet access.

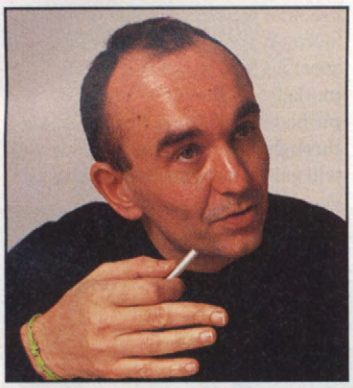


Relic pushed back the boundaries of the real-time strategy genre with the recent space epic, *Homeworld*.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Well, ask yourself this question: Why doesn't your mom play games? When you know the answer to my question, you've answered yours. The truth is, there are so many factors at work that it's tough to say if there is any one thing or if it's even possible that this might happen.

PETER MOLYNEUX LIONHEAD STUDIOS

Molyneux practically invented the god game with *Populous*, and has been pushing back creative boundaries ever since



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
If you told anyone that a big grey box that you have to configure individually and update on a monthly basis was going to be the perfect games machine for the future, they would laugh at you. PCs have to become more sexy if they are to survive.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
What console games have always had is superb design and accessibility, and what PC games are less well known for is simplicity, and the mass market nature of their games. This means that next-generation consoles will have the power and design talent, forcing PC developers to work out not only the technology issues but also the very fundamentals of design. Anybody can come up with a revolutionary 3D engine, but this will only be eclipsed by the next launch of a 3D graphics card. Where the real skills lie is within the game's design.



Part *Populous*, part Tamagotchi, part unique vision. Lionhead's *Black & White* is one of the more original-sounding titles due this year.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
Rumours abound that a certain large corporation is working on a next generation platform with PC technology (*That'll be those Microsoft chaps, I expect – Ed.*) If they are true this will have an Earth-shattering effect on PC games.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
We must, as an industry, start to make games that appeal to both the mass market and gamers. Would a deep, hardcore strategy game ever be a mass market product? Maybe not – but a strategy game with a story element could be. We don't need to dumb down games, but we must look at the concepts that are appealing to the mass market.

BRUCE SHELLEY ENSEMBLE STUDIOS

It was during his time with Sid Meier that Bruce Shelley discovered his love of the strategy genre. The superb *Age Of Empires* showed the rest of the world just how he felt



Age Of Kings is the follow-up to the massively popular *Age Of Empires*, adding fresh graphics and advanced AI routines to the strategic mix.



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
The PC will continue to be a prominent gaming platform for a number of years to come. Processor, memory, graphics, sound, and online capabilities climb higher every year. We'll eventually reach a point where the PC doesn't have to be opened up every so often to replace outdated components because its performance will be 'good enough' and 'cheap enough'. We believe it will still be at least another round of consoles past the PlayStation 2 and Nintendo Dolphin before the PC lags behind.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
We believe we'll look back in a number of years at the PlayStation 2 and other next-generation consoles as the first of the special purpose home computers. You'll have a living-room console for game playing, listening to CDs, surfing the Net, and watching DVDs. Then you'll have the console in the study for word processing, spreadsheets, and surfing the Net, which will still be an OK game machine.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Even though the computer game industry makes more money than the film industry, the movie industry appeals to a wider segment of the population. The game industry must do the same by increasing accessibility to computer games by:

- lowering the usability barrier to increase the gaming audience
- increasing the social interaction of multiplayer games to build the social aspect
- focus more on story and content as Hollywood (for better or worse) has done for years.

Assuming you have the basics, such as a large enough installed base to really compete with something as pervasive as a TV, and games are as cheap as going to the movies, then, like most innovations in gaming, there will be one game that gets it right and becomes a mass-market phenomenon (multiply *Myst* and *Tetris* together and then add some more for good measure).

DEMIS HASSABIS ELIXIR STUDIOS

One of the rising young stars of the British games industry, Elixir's first title, *Republic: The Revolution*, is incredibly ambitious and promises to be one of the biggest titles of the year



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
The PC still has a good few years left in it at least. The likes of the X-Box will cause a shift in the marketplace, not least because the PC is about the most unintuitive machine ever designed and anything that eases the tortuous configuration problems of PCs must be a good thing. What is most likely to happen that games will still be developed for the high-end PC (which will probably be in much the same form as it is today) and then converted to the latest incarnation of the X-Box. Thus, I think the PC in its current form will still be supported – even if it isn't necessarily the biggest 'Windows-based' gaming platform.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
So far the trend has been for the most ground-breaking games and the most original design ideas to come from the fertile PC development community. It's true to say that some console games have taken well-trodden genres to fantastically polished heights, but innovations have been, generally speaking, PC-led. This is largely to do with two factors. Firstly, at any given time, the latest PC is the most powerful platform around and naturally the most cutting edge software needs the best hardware. Secondly, the PC market is more mature and diverse – thus providing the necessary commercial platform for new ideas to be attempted. The first factor may change if machines like the X-Box, which is basically a console, track the latest hardware advances. The second factor may well change if Sony achieves its aim of getting a PlayStation 2 into every household!

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
I think that will happen naturally of its own accord as: more people start playing games; as more diverse games get created and supported commercially; and as more films and books are written about the games world. In short, as games playing becomes viewed as more and more 'normal'. Oh, and commercially speaking, the bigger the games market gets, the more it will be pushed into society's consciousness, through adverts and so on. which will gain it mass market 'acceptance'.

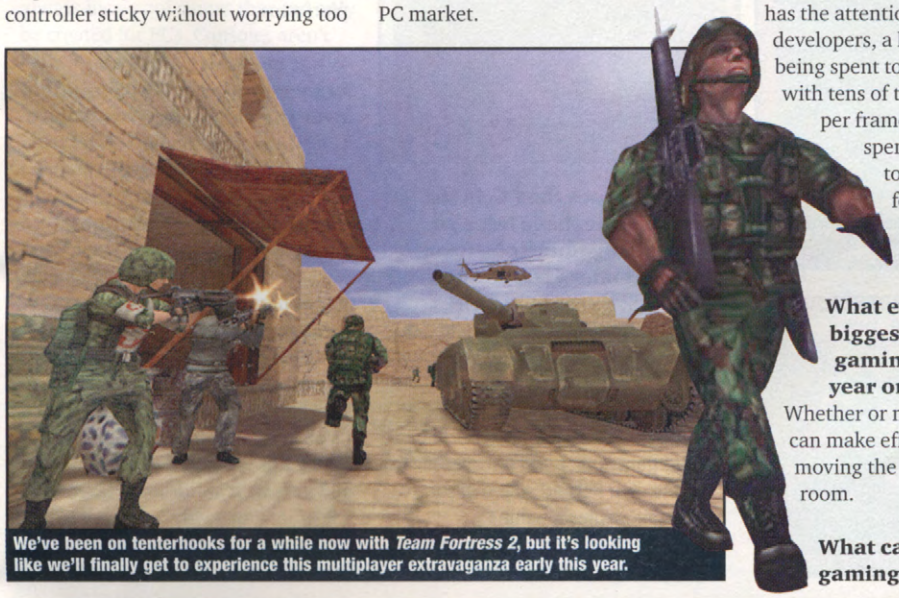


Elixir's first project, *Republic: The Revolution*, is an ambitious affair that aims to fully simulate an entire country, right down to the blades of grass.

GABE NEWELL VALVE

Valve developed *Half-Life*, the game we voted as game of the millennium, so we're hanging on Gabe's every word

How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
The main area where the PC is deficient is in not having a console-style design. Consoles boot fast. Consoles can be put on your carpet. I can get a console controller sticky without worrying too much about it. Consoles are pretty idiot proof. I put in a CD or cartridge and press the go button. By about 2002 we'll know whether or not the PC will grow into the console space or the consoles will grow up into becoming the living room gaming, Internet, HDTV client, taking away a big chunk of the consumer PC market.

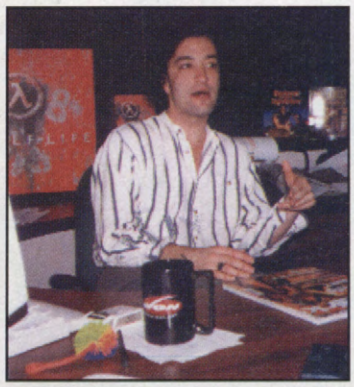


We've been on tenterhooks for a while now with *Team Fortress 2*, but it's looking like we'll finally get to experience this multiplayer extravaganza early this year.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
One impact it has had already is to pull attention away from the Internet and towards polygon counts. Sony doesn't really have an Internet story to tell, with no modem for the PlayStation 2. Given how much Sony has the attention of many game developers, a lot more energy is being spent to figure out what to do with tens of thousands of polygons per frame and less is being spent on thinking of ways to utilise the Internet for gameplay, updates, incremental content, and so on.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
Whether or not Microsoft and Intel can make effective progress on moving the PC into the living room.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Throughout history there's always a tendency to blame a wide variety of problems on any new medium. In France, plays were banned for a long time because they could corrupt the sensibilities of 'the masses'. Any popular new entertainment form will be viewed as harmful to whatever groups are currently seen as being in need of protection. The current enthusiasm in the mass media for blaming gaming and the Net for all society's ills is probably a sign that they are well on their way to acceptability.



ADAM SHAIKH THE DIGITAL VILLAGE

***Starship Titanic* helped to keep the point-and-click adventure alive, and Adam Shaikh also has these words of wisdom for you...**



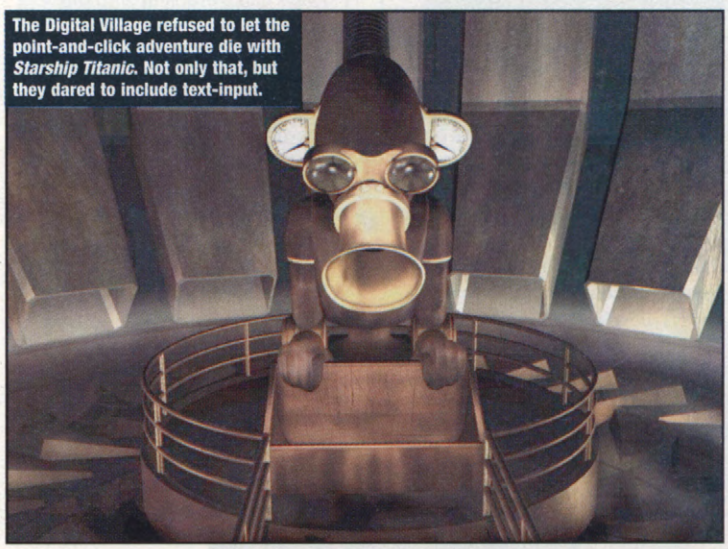
How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
The biggest reason the PC will survive is that so many people have and need one. If someone has a 'work' PC, that machine is also available for entertainment use. It's not going to suddenly disappear as a platform – it's too prevalent in our lives. Hence, there will always be an installed user base for products. Consoles come and go, but the PC is forever. Having said this, the PC will always be a niche market entertainment machine compared to consoles. It's just too fiddly to set up, most games are bugged in one way or another, and you have to sit in a less comfortable environment than when using a console.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
The biggest change will probably be in the quality of games. When the PlayStation first came out, it could do things better than the PCs of the time. Any game planned for both platforms pushed both machines, and was competitive in both markets. PCs are now so much more powerful that ports from consoles look awful without an enormous amount of extra work.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
There will be one game that will spawn a host of clones that flood the market – basically the *Doom, Tomb Raider* or *C&C* of 2000. Buggered if I know what that game will be, but it's bound to come, and it will alter PC gaming just like the above games. Even if only by pissing people off at the number of similar titles around.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
The non-gamer associates 'games' with particular products – usually the ones that get all the press, such as *Quake* or *Tomb Raider*. Therefore they believe that this is gaming. Games need to get known by their genres. Few people will claim they don't like films, but they'll quite happily state they hate action or horror films. Games are just 'games' to the non-gamer.

When people start to differentiate games in the same way, then the non-gamer might begin to hear about gameplay elements they find interesting, and then actually buy the game. Once people realise that games may hold an attraction for them, then they will join the community.



The Digital Village refused to let the point-and-click adventure die with *Starship Titanic*. Not only that, but they dared to include text-input.



Glorified spreadsheet or ultimate soccer simulation? The debate rages as the Collyers take the ridiculously successful *Championship Manager* series to even greater heights.





OLIVER COLLYER SPORTS INTERACTIVE

Oliver Collyer is responsible for *Champ Manager*, which means he's responsible for wasting more man hours than anyone else



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive ?
The PC will remain prominent while it has the best games, and can support the types of games that consoles can't. Until a console arrives with enough re-writeable storage potential, then there will be certain games that will only be possible on a PC and so it will survive as a viable games machine. However, it won't reach the masses as a games platform unless it becomes more reliable and user-friendly.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming ?
I don't think they'll affect it at all – there will be great games on both platforms.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so ?
Us releasing our next football management game, tearing-up the record books (again), and pissing-off the people who think all games should be in 3D.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
The games industry needs to lessen its obsession with driving things, killing things, blowing things up and girls with abnormally large chests, and instead have more in the way of intelligent games that fire the imagination.

ERIN ROBERTS DIGITAL ANVIL

Brother of Chris '*Wing Commander*' Roberts, Erin is an accomplished designer in his own right, notably on *Privateer II: The Darkening*

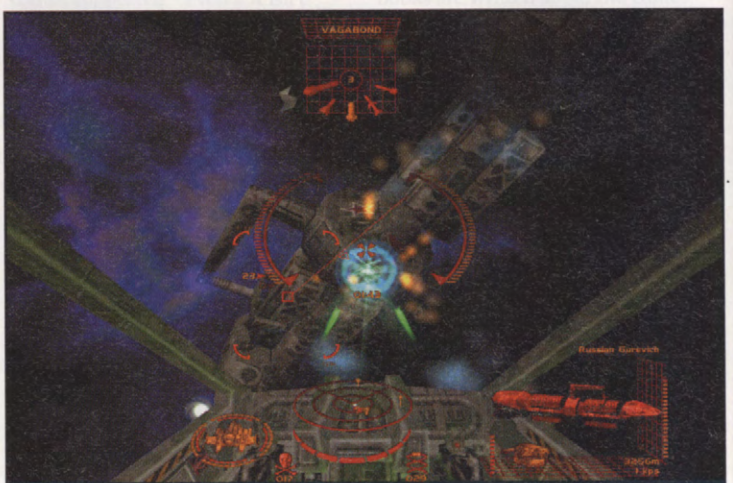


How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
It'll be here for a while. One thing the PC does is move on fast. Even though you bring on the next generation consoles, the PC can always move on ahead of them. I do think that console development is catching up. You can now create games on a console that would be on a storytelling and gameplay level with the PC. The PC audience is always growing – everyone always has a PC at home for one reason or another even though it's more expensive than consoles. The only justification for having a hi-end PC now is for playing games.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
I always had a problem with the PlayStation and the like because you couldn't quite get games to the same level as the PCs big storytelling products, because of memory and graphics limitations. But looking at the specifications of the next-generation consoles, it looks like we will be able to do the epic kind of product.


We can't wait for the next two Anvil productions.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
A few years ago it was all about who had the quickest engine. Hardware acceleration now has pretty much levelled the playing field, but what it's brought back is storytelling. I think that's what we'll see more of – storytelling. And there'll be more focus on gameplay rather than people developing games that say, 'Look how fast my engine is.'



Borrowing heavily from both *Wing Commander* and *Privateer*, Erin Roberts' *Starlancer* is expected to push the space shooter to the limits of both gameplay and presentation.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
It's all about bringing new users into gaming. Not just the joystick jockeys, but the guys that have never played a game before and want to enjoy it straight away. We're getting there. When I started on *Strike Commander*, if you sold over a 100,000 units you had a hit title. These days a hit title is like 1,500,000-2,000,000. It's already much more widespread.

RICHARD GARRIOT ORIGIN

Richard Garriot aka Lord British aka the *Ultima* series. Happy?

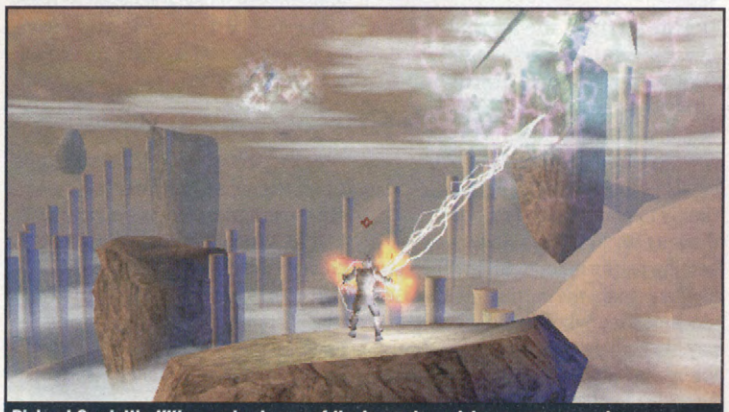


How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
PCs will remain a great game platform for a long time. As long as the PC remains the machine with more expensive, thus more diverse and powerful hardware, you will always have cool games that can only be created for PCs. Consoles aren't likely to have expensive components, such as large hard drives, as standard in the near future.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
Consoles will always have a separate advantage. As they are a closed system, they can be optimised for certain types of gaming. Thus, for a short time, you may be able to get superior 3D graphics on a specific platform. This next generation of consoles is particularly good at 3D graphics. We will see some aspects of state-of-the-art gaming happen on them first. Time, however, is always the great equaliser, and PCs will remain the place people invest larger dollars in, expanding the capabilities of their machines.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
Online games. We will soon see a myriad of cool new types of games that can only be created online. I must admit, however, I see very few so far. Most online games in development and announced by competitors, are in the 'UO' model. There is far too little innovation happening in what should be a wide open field with an opportunity for radical advancement. I fear most publishers are still too averse to risk to innovate significantly. It will take a few bold visionaries to open up this new medium. I hope to be one.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Those other mediums you mention are all passive entertainments requiring no skill or even effort. Thus we may never be an 'equal'. However, we must make the game and its interface as understandable as possible – as easy as driving a car or using a microwave. Games won't really come of age until people can play most games without help. This must be the norm across the industry not just for a few individual games. Stereos with confusing controls don't sell large numbers in comparison to those that do. We have yet to have the majority of games that are playable with little ramp up.



Richard Garriott's *Ultima* series is one of the longest surviving games around.

IAN LIVINGSTONE EIDOS INTERACTIVE

Ian Livingstone is perhaps most fondly remembered as 'that bloke off of the *Fighting Fantasy* books'



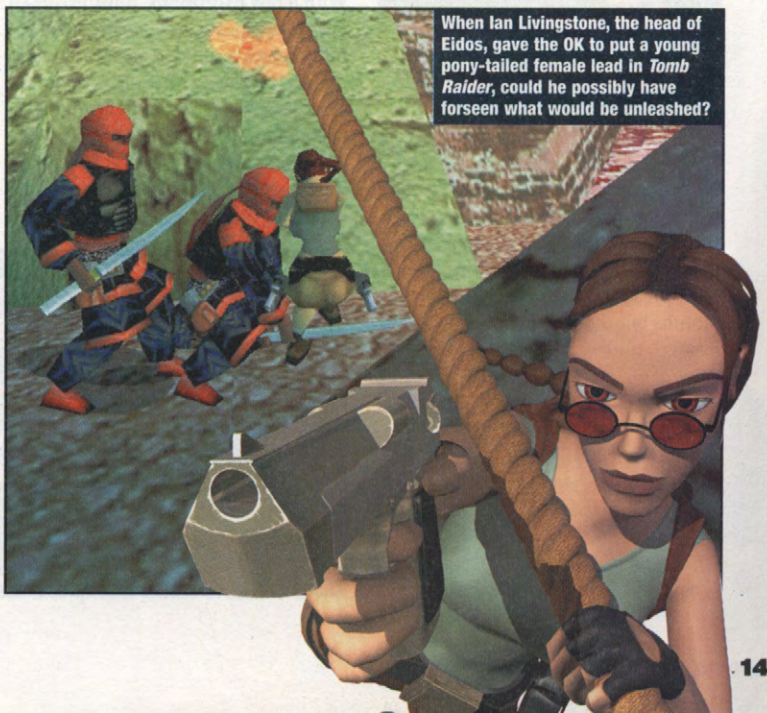
How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
To the average consumer the PC is a nightmare. When they buy a game, they are often unsure if it will run on their machine. Then there are set-up and configuration problems – hardly 'plug and play'. PCs are also expensive. No wonder Bill Gates is getting serious about the X-Box. At best the PC will still be used by the development community but it looks destined to be less popular with the games player – unless it becomes a lot cheaper and simpler to use (ie the X-Box).

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
The PC is the natural development platform. PC technology advances constantly and of course developers always want to have access to the latest technology. However, if PlayStation 2 and X-Box development environments satisfy the needs of developers (and it looks like they will), PCs might lose the high ground. Call me old-fashioned, but I hope not!

If Sony dominate the interactive entertainment world as they have done with their previous consumer hardware, then it's pretty obvious to me that the PC is in for a rough ride as a games platform.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
PlayStation 2 is a bona fide entertainment centre and Sony intend to get it into a lot more living rooms around the world as a result. New users will see it as the natural gaming and Internet box. Why will they pay more to buy a PC? Graphically enhanced spreadsheets?

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Historically gamers have been viewed as 'freaks' or 'anoraks' because the graphics in computer games used to be pretty basic, leaving the non-gamer to wonder why anybody would bother to play them. Now, high-end PCs and next-generation consoles display a viewing experience not too dissimilar to broadcast quality TV. When the mass media see, for example, a football game where they can recognise real people, acceptance will be complete.



When Ian Livingstone, the head of Eidos, gave the OK to put a young pony-tailed female lead in *Tomb Raider*, could he possibly have forseen what would be unleashed?

DAVID CAGE QUANTIC DREAMS

Quantic Dreams rescued the image of French game developers with *The Nomad Soul*



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
To me, the PC has never been a pure gaming platform in that sense that only a very few people buy a PC simply to play games. I still don't think its survival is in danger as a gaming platform though. It will always remain the cutting-edge machine for anybody who is ready to pay the high prices. Consoles are an interesting alternative for people who just want to play and don't want to pay for anything else. There is no real competition between PC and consoles. They are just different hardware for different needs. I suppose this difference will always exist.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
One sure thing is that any major game developed in the coming months will have a Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 conversion. There are good chances that PC and console gameplay will become closer and closer, although PC games will always be technically ahead as hardware is constantly evolving.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
On the programming side, networks and AI. When fast connections are cheaply available for everybody, it will open a new field of gameplay. The PC remains the best platform for networks because of the keyboard, mouse and hard drive. The network culture is also much more integrated in PC designers' minds. AI is, as everybody says, the next big step forward. Nobody knows exactly what it means, but it seems obvious.

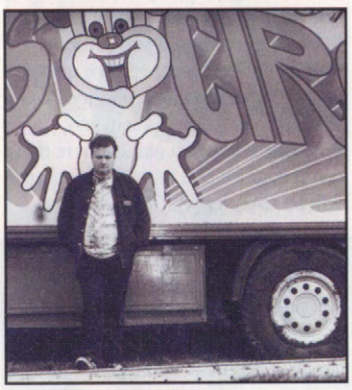
What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Make products that are socially acceptable. It is still difficult to understand for non-gamers how anybody can have fun just running in corridors and killing everyone they meet. Games must include more content, more sense and more emotions to be understood by the mass media. Video games are like Jean-Claude Van Damme movies – plenty of action but no storyline, which kills the interest of 'non-addicted' people.



Reversing the image of French games, Quantic Dreams' *The Nomad Soul* is a futuristic city-based epic, with total freedom of movement and a soundtrack by David Bowie.

GLENN CORPES LOST TOYS

Another of the ex-Bullfrog posse, Corpes and co. founded Lost Toys last year and are working on their first, much-anticipated project



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
In its present state, only a couple of months but that's only because the PC never really has or had a present state. If by 'present state' you mean 'constantly doubling in performance every few months' then I reckon the PC can keep it up for the foreseeable future. I could rant on about how backward compatibility with the 8086 (a barely 16-bit processor) and other bits of legacy hardware and software is holding the platform back but I've been doing that ever since I moved from the Amiga eight years ago and the poxy old Microsoft/Intel combo is still going strong.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
With a few exceptions, most PC games are either 'PC specific' with a million key combos, a flashy mouse-driven interface and multi-megabyte save games or 'console ports', which use no more than a few thousand polygons per frame and two megabytes of memory for the entire code and game state because they also have to run on the Playstation. More powerful consoles mean that those cool, easy-to-access console ports will start actually exploiting your PCs hardware, that is until you upgrade again...

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
The release of Lost Toys first game :-) X-box (if it exists...) will also be important, as virtually nobody will want to release a game that isn't playable on a Joypad and developers who are undecided about where to draw the line for minimum spec will be tempted to raise it to X-box levels.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
I don't think that anything can be done or needs to be done beyond just waiting. Most of the people I know who were playing games in the early eighties are still doing it despite being in their mid-thirties now. The number of people who have never touched a computer is going down every day simply because people get old and die. Very soon now, there will be pensioners who were only a few years older than I am now when Space Invaders was released, scary stuff...



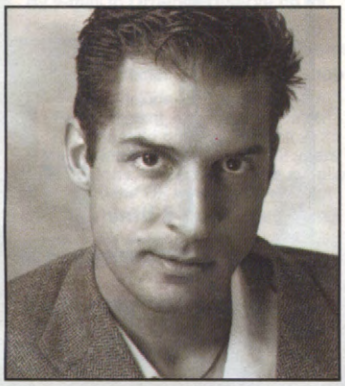
Dungeon Keeper. But what next?



We don't know and they ain't telling.

DAVE PERRY SHINY

The shiniest man in the game's industry and some say chief innovator too. Dave Perry tells us what's what



If future games start demanding $400 of 3D card with 128Mb of RAM, then we are kidding ourselves if we think Joe Consumer is going to cough up that kind of cash.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year of so?
When Microsoft releases the X-BOX. Finally a CHEAP PC that does not need the consumer to buy three more parts that won't work together to make it good.

How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
The PC market needs to be simplified without all the pain-in-the-ass card and driver and slot problems. So what are they doing about it? Making these new "Easy PC" boxes. The problem with that is that then you can't upgrade to keep improving the experience. It will be a weird experience not having a screwdriver beside your PC.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Our goal is to make it frickin easy to do... Easier than setting the clock on a VCR. When games are that simple and your mother can play, you will see them having a go while they are waiting for *Coronation Street* to come on.



The Angel Bob is here to wreak angelic havoc.

How will the next-generation consoles affect the development of PC games and gaming?
They will just force there to be more quality all around. The PC 3D Card companies are working their asses off trying to make sure that no console company pushes them around. The problem is that they are losing sight of the goal. The goal is to get NEW people playing 3D games...



Surely you've got to be over 18 to get into a place like this?

JULIAN GOLLOP MYTHOS GAMES

The Gollop trio run Mythos Games, created *X-COM* and therefore are the Godfathers of turn-based strategy



Magic & Mayhem is Mythos' latest game, based on the Spectrum classic *Chaos*.



How long does the PC, in its present state, have left as a prominent gaming platform and what must it do to survive?
I cannot see the PC ever diminishing as a games platform. It will probably remain the first choice for those who are serious about multiplayer gaming, and also for those who always want the latest technology. However, despite DirectX it remains a difficult platform for developers and publishers. The variety of consumer hardware is quite large, and installing PC software remains a right royal pain in the rear end for many people.

How will the next-generation consoles will affect the development of PC games and gaming?
I don't think the impact will be huge. Next-generation consoles will sell to owners of existing systems, and I think that it is impossible to match the impact of the original PlayStation. However, if the software available diversifies, and we see more strategy games or multiplayer games available on the new consoles, then this will encroach on PC territory. Certainly the next generation of consoles have much better connectivity, but it remains to be seen whether this potential will be realised.

What event will have the biggest impact on PC gaming over the next year or so?
Speech recognition hardware and broad band multiplayer networks would be great, but it may take more than a year before we see these. I cannot foresee any single event that will dominate the PC world, but I expect a continuing growth in massively multiplayer games, hopefully breaking out of the current RPG niche. There is great potential here.

What can be done to make gaming as socially acceptable as television, film or music in the mass media?
Well, it's only a matter of time. As the non-gaming generation disappears, games will be as socially acceptable as other media, maybe more so. Film, television and music are essentially passive experiences, whereas games have the potential to challenge people mentally, physically and even socially. 'Nuff said.



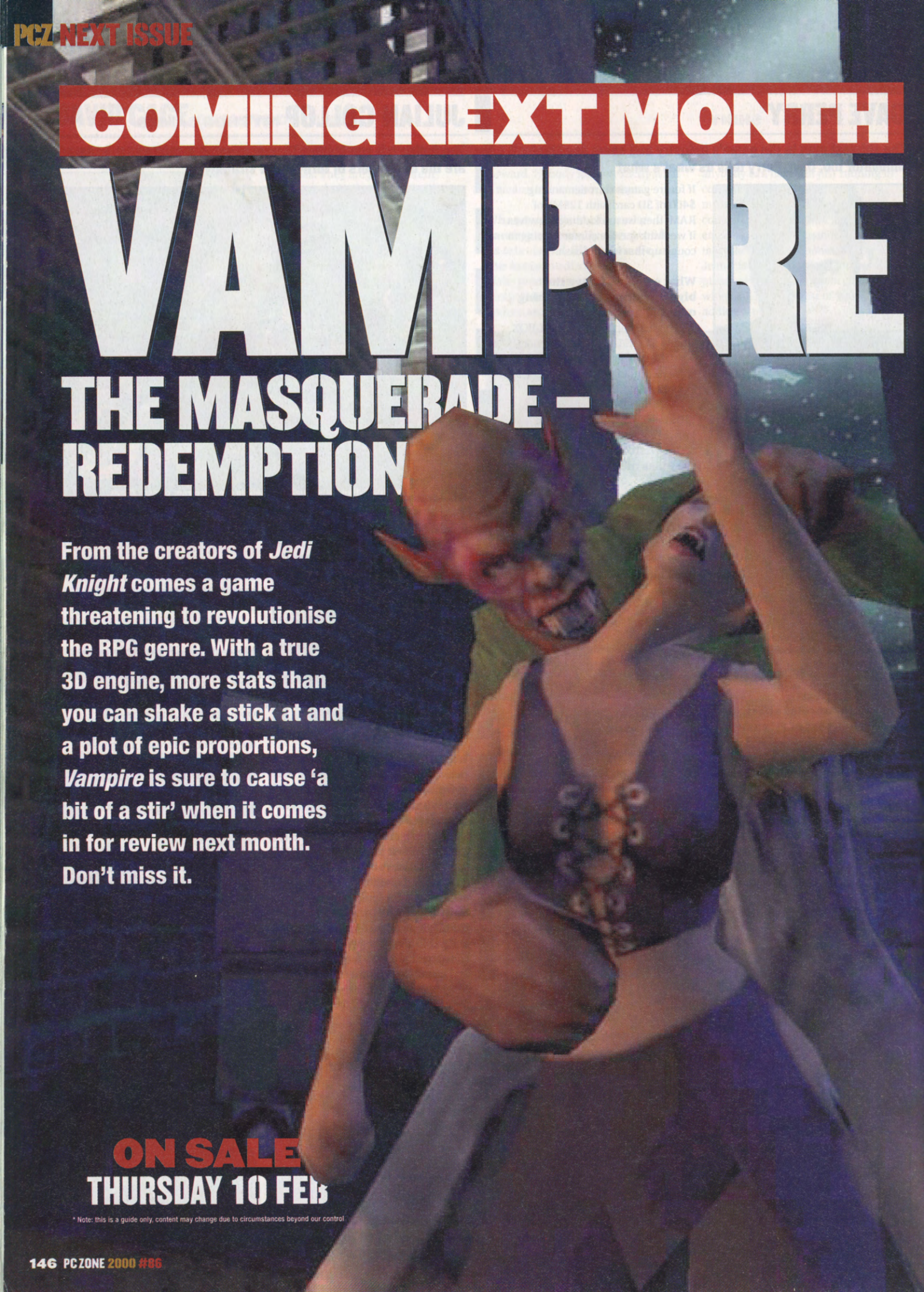
Next up from Mythos is *Dreamland*, out early 2001 – more next issue.

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- Optimised for Pentium III Processor



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